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# WHAT CHRISTIANITY MEANS TO ME

A SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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# WHAT CHRISTIANITY MEANS TO ME

## A SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BY

LYMAN ABBOTT

Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

New York

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# PROLOGUE

THE Christianity of the Twentieth Century is not the same as the Christianity of Jesus Christ; and it ought not to be. For Christianity is a life, and after nineteen centuries of growth it can no more be the same that it was in the First Century than an oak is the same as an acorn, or America in 1920 is the same as America in 1787. Jesus told his disciples that the Kingdom of Heaven was like a seed planted, which from the least of seeds would grow to be a great tree. This is what has happened. The Roman Catholic Mass is quite different from the Last Supper as taken by Jesus and his friends in that upper chamber; the Westminster Confession of Faith is quite different from the Sermon on the Mount; the highly organized churches of the present day are quite different from the Church in the house as described in the Book of Acts. During these nineteen centuries philosophers have been trying to interpret Christian life and experience and so have developed a Christian

theology; reformers have been trying to apply the principles inculcated by Jesus Christ to the varying and often complex conditions of society and so have developed a Christian social ethics; men and women have been trying to express their experiences in methods adapted to their various temperaments and so have developed Christian rituals; pagans coming into the Christian life have brought their paganism with them, so that while their paganism has been Christianized at the same time and by the same process Christianity has been paganized.

To-day throughout Christendom we are submitting this modern Christianity to a sifting process. We are trying to find out what in it is Christian and what pagan, what natural growth and what artificial addition, what we shall accept and what reject. The Protestants are rejoiced to see this sifting process going on in the Roman Catholic communion, the Liberals welcome it in the conservative churches; personally I welcome it wherever it appears and whatever questions it asks. Unbelief is less dangerous than insincere beliefs. But in this book I do not take part in this sifting process. Without attempting to determine what of modern Chris-

tianity is true and what false, I invite my reader to join me in an attempt to get back of all the product of centuries of life and thought, to inquire what was Christianity as it was taught by Jesus Christ in the First Century, to ascertain what is essential in his spirit and his teaching which makes Augustine and Luther, Calvin and Wesley, Lyman Beecher and W. E. Channing, in spite of their differences, Christian teachers, and the Roman Catholic Sisters of Charity and the Social Settlement workers Christian despite their differences in temperament and method.

My critical studies have convinced me that we have in the New Testament a fair reflection of the teaching of Jesus Christ as it was understood by his immediate disciples in the First Century; that there is no inconsistency between his teaching and that of the Apostle Paul; that the Fourth Gospel was written by the Apostle John, or by one or more of his disciples recording reports received from him; that it truly reflects the mystical aspects, as Matthew reflects the ethical aspects of the Master's teaching; and that, if we would understand the Master, we must realize that he was both practical

and mystical, Oriental and Occidental. But I do not accept the conclusions of those scholars who have attempted to distinguish in the Gospels between the teachings of Jesus and those of his interpreters. Such a discrimination cannot be accomplished by grammatical and exegetical methods.

I began the systematic study of the New Testament when I entered the ministry in 1860. Since that time I have been a student of one book, a follower of one Master. My aim in life as teacher, pastor, administrator, editor and author, has been to understand the principles which Jesus Christ inculcated and to possess something of the spirit which animated him, that I might apply both his principles and his spirit to the solution of the various problems, individual and social, of our time. Other books I have studied, to other teachers I have listened; but in the main either that I might better understand Christ's teaching or better understand the problems to which that teaching was to be applied. Many problems which theologians have attempted to solve I am content to leave unsolved. Like the Hebrew Psalmist I do not exercise myself in things too wonderful for me. After sixty years

of study I still say with Paul, "I know only in fragments and I teach only in fragments." After more than sixty years of Christian experience,— for I cannot remember the time when I did not wish to be a Christian,— I still say with him, "I count not myself to have apprehended but I follow after that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

This volume is an endeavor to state simply and clearly the results of these sixty years of Bible study, this more than sixty years of Christian experience. The grounds of my confidence in the truth of the statements made in this volume are the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles as reported in the New Testament, interpreted and confirmed by a study of life and by my own spiritual consciousness of Christ's gracious presence and life-giving love.

LYMAN ABBOTT.

The Knoll,
Cornwall-on-Hudson, N. Y.

# WHAT CHRISTIANITY MEANS TO ME

## CHAPTER I

### HOW THIS BOOK CAME TO BE WRITTEN

On this my eighty-fifth birthday I look back over the intervening three-quarters of a century and see myself a boy of eight or ten, growing up in a Puritan household under Puritan training.

This boy's mother is dead, his father is hundreds of miles away, his home is with a grandfather whom he reveres and an aunt whom he loves. His supreme ambition is to be like his mother, his father, his grandfather, his aunt. They are his ideals.

He has read his Bible, has attended church, has heard sermons, though not listened to them, has been at Sunday School, has honestly tried to do right, to obey his conscience and the laws of God

as they have been explained to him by the Bible and his religious teachers. He has heard the text, "Thou, God, seest me," and has wished that God did not. He has been afraid to answer to God, has dreaded the time when he shall stand before God's judgment seat. To him God has been a kind of awful and omnipresent police justice, and he a scared culprit who knows he is liable to punishment, but does not clearly know why. To him, in short, religion has been little more than a succession of sinnings and repentings.

As he has grown older, he has had explained to him from the pulpit, often, the conditions of salvation. The explanation, as he has understood it, is something like this: He has broken the law of God. It is necessary that he should be punished. God is first of all a just God and must punish those who offend his law. But Jesus Christ is merciful rather than just, perhaps rather more merciful than just. He has, therefore, come to the earth and suffered the penalty of sin in order that the sinner may be let off from that penalty. In order to be let off from that penalty, the sinner must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that he has

come to earth, and that he has suffered the penalty. This boy, growing to youth and from youth to young manhood, cannot bring himself to believe anything merely because he is told that he must believe it. He wishes to believe only the truth. His temperament is such that he cannot accept such a theological statement simply on authority. He begins, therefore, a course of theological study. He gets Pearson on the Creed and reads it through. Then he takes up the successive articles of the creed and reads various treatises elucidating them. Brought up in a Puritan household, he naturally turns to Puritan divines. He reads Calvin's "Institutes," Jonathan Edwards on the "Will," Dwight's "Theology." But the more he studies, the more mysterious this theology becomes. It does not fit in with his ideas of righteousness that one person should be punished for another person's sins. It does not appeal to his affections, this portraiture of a God who can be satisfied only by inflicting penalty on those who have done wrong. It does not appeal to his reason, this religion which requires him to forgive his enemy until seventy times seven, yet tells him that God will not freely forgive the

least sin of the most unconscious sinner. His associations are in the Church of Christ. The men and women whom he most reveres are members of that church. The work which the church is trying to do increasingly appeals to him. Finally, he goes to the orthodox pastor of an orthodox church and explains his difficulty and states his experience. His experience is very simple: "I would like to have a character like that of Christ and to do the kind of work that Christ did in the world and I am sorry that my character is not more Christlike and my work more worthy. But the system of theology, with its Three-Persons-in-One God, its vicarious atonement, its eternal punishment, its foreordination and decrees, I cannot understand; and the more I study it, the less I understand it." And the orthodox minister replies to him: "We none of us understand it very well and we should be glad to have you join the church." And he does join the church. As he looks back upon it, he has reason to suspect that he was accepted, not on his very imperfect confession of faith, but on the fact that his father and his uncle were members of the church and he

was believed to be a young man without bad habits.

About this time he begins to attend Plymouth Church and to get from the preaching of Henry Ward Beecher a different conception of theology and also a different conception of religion. The change in his apprehension is gradual, so gradual that, as he looks back over a period of more than half a century, he finds himself unable to realize it with any vividness or to describe it with any accuracy. Even now, as he attempts to describe its result, he is quite conscious that his description is inadequate, if not inaccurate, and will be certainly misunderstood, but it is something like this: He begins to believe that Jesus Christ is not an ambassador from God to Man, not an intermediary between God and Man, not a victim who has borne the penalty which God exacts of man, but God entering into a human life that he may enable men to understand him.

Suppose that all your life you had dreaded an awful God, or in fear submitted to a fateful God, or hesitated between defying and cringing before a hated God, or vainly sought to understand a hid-

ing God, and suddenly the curtain were rent aside and you saw the luminous figure of the living Christ, and over his head were written the words, "This is thy God, O man." Something like this was the experience which dawned on the mind of this youth growing into manhood. He had thought of God as infinite power. Here is a God revealed to him, not by an awful manifestation of supernatural power but by the endearing manifestation of an unparalleled love. He had thought of God as infinite intelligence. Here is a God, revealed in the life of a man who is limited in his wisdom as the men about him, knowing no more of geography or history or science than those whose life he shares. He had thought of God as impersonated justice, who could not bear to look upon any wrongdoing and to whom the peccadillo of a child and the crime of a Nero or a Caligula were all as one. He sees instead a God who takes the little children in his arms to bless them, turns to the weeping, fallen woman with the words, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more"; a God who reserves his indignation for the hypocrite who devours widows' houses and for a pretense makes long prayers. He

had thought of God as a great king, sitting upon a great white throne, and he tried to send his prayers up thither by a kind of wireless telegraphy, though wireless telegraphy was not then known. But now, when he kneels to pray, he first reads something from the Gospels, then forms in his mind a picture of Jesus, sits down by the side of the man and talks with him and prayer becomes easy conversation. He had thought of God as an omniscient judge who knew him as the detective police know and dog the footsteps of a criminal. Now, he reads the story of a God in man who has known sorrow, has wrestled with temptation, has understood by experience the trials that come through the voices of ambition, of pleasure and of affection.

God is no longer to him a great unknown. This youth, growing to manhood, no longer goes to the great theologians for light. He goes to the simpler interpreters of life. He remembers his own father, who might easily have made for himself a great reputation in science or in philosophy, but who gave himself to writing books for children that children could understand. He reads those letters of the author of "Alice in Wonderland" to the

little children, and sees how this great mathematician shared the children's life, felt their enthusiasms, participated in their imaginations, was a child with the children. And he begins to say to himself, "My God has come to me as these authors went to the little children. He has come to me that he might write in his life on earth a language which I can understand. He is one who sees life as I see it, experiences life as I have experienced it, shares my life with me, that I may see life as he sees it, experience life as he experiences it, share his life with him. Now I can understand him, for he has entered into my life. We understand each other. We are friends. He is to me the Great Companion."

This boy now grown to manhood, no longer goes up to the great white throne to find his God, no longer anticipates in the future life a day of judgment when he will stand face to face with God. His God who was here once is here still. The veiled, invisible figure that is always walking through life, always sitting at all men's side, was for one moment made so clear that human eyes could see him and human hands could handle him, then, hidden from human eyes, escaping from human

touch, is the nearer to us because invisible, intangible. There is no home in which love is centered and cradled in which he does not sit as he sat in the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus whom he loved, no home where sorrow and tears have entered, in which he does not come saying, "There is no death. He that liveth and believeth in me can never die." There is no man beating upon his breast and crying out, "Oh, thou unknown God, have mercy upon me a sinner," to whom he does not say, "Thou art more justified than the proud man who thought he was righteous." There is no true wedding to which he does not bring the cheer of merrymaking friendship. There are no children whom he does not seek to take into his arms and put his hands upon them and bless them. There is no sorrow which he does not share with sorrowing humanity. The bitterest sorrow of all, remorse, the sorrow for wrong done that can never be undone, this he shares most of all. Henceforth, through all the subsequent years of this seeker's life, for him the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ. He has no interest in theological debates concerning the metaphysical relation of

Jesus of Nazareth to the Eternal. He finds no satisfaction in scholastic definitions of a triune and little known God, in the ecclesiastical characterizations of Jesus as Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten not Made, and the like. His interest is in the divine light which Jesus Christ has brought into the world. His satisfaction is in the experience of fellowship with the God revealed in Jesus Christ,— a God who is upon the earth and whose life is ever a Christ life,— a life of love, service and sacrifice.

Inspired by this faith in a God whose glory is reflected in the face of Jesus Christ, he is possessed with a growing desire to give this faith to others. It means so much to him. It so lightens burdens, strengthens purpose, inspires with courage, solves perplexities, simplifies life, bestows peace, that he longs to give to others the gift which has been given to him. He leaves his chosen profession of the law, not because he is dissatisfied with it, but because he is eager to devote all his engeries to the joyous task of giving to others the glad tidings which have made him glad.

To that purpose he has now for sixty years given

himself in various forms of activity, but with unvarying purpose. As pastor, secretary, editor, author, he has had no other aim. As preacher he has known no other sermon. His first book was a Life of Jesus Christ; his second, a volume on certain New Testament aspects in Old Testament teachings; his third, a Commentary on the New Testament. When he has written on the Bible, it has been to interpret the prophets and apostles of the olden time as messengers of a God revealed in man. When he has written on theology, it has been to interpret life as a discipline of men being made God-like. When he has written on politics or sociology, it has been to throw some light on the path that leads to the kingdom of God. When he has written as editor of a weekly journal, it has been to interpret current history in its relation to this development of the human race and to apply to current problems, individual and social, the principles inculcated by Jesus Christ and still more the spirit which Jesus Christ possessed. From first to last, he has been a student of one book, the New Testament. Other books he has studied, including the Old Testament, for the light they throw either on the

teaching of the New Testament or on the sorrowful conditions of human life for which Jesus Christ has brought a remedy. From first to last, he has been a disciple and a follower of one Master. A Congregationalist because he was born and brought up in the Congregational Church, he has been equally ready to work with prelate or layman, Catholic or Protestant, believer or agnostic, Jew or Gentile, whether he formally acknowledged allegiance to Jesus Christ or not, provided he was imbued with the spirit of the Christ and was endeavoring to inculcate the principles of the Christ. That he has always been correct in his own interpretations, he does not imagine. But looking back over that sixty years, he can and does affirm, as in the presence of the Master, that his one controlling purpose has been to give to others that secret of a happy life which he has found in his faith that Jesus the Christ, is the Savior of all men, especially of them that believe.

And now that he has passed four score years, he attempts to set down here, simply and clearly, what he believes is the message which Jesus Christ has brought to the world. This book has long lain in

his mind. Its failings will not be due to lack of meditation; they will be due to the fact that no one man can tell all that Christianity means. He can only tell what Christianity means to him. This book, therefore, will be a fragment, as every book on the teaching of Jesus Christ must be a fragment. "We know in fragments and we prophesy in fragments," says the Apostle Paul. I am content to add my fragment to those contributed by abler predecessors and, as this volume sums up the teaching of a lifetime, it will repeat sometimes, doubtless in form as well as in substance, what the writer has before taught; and as the writer's understanding of the Master has grown and, therefore, changed from year to year, this interpretation will be inconsistent probably in more than one passage with interpretations which he has before given to the world. Nor does he intend to make any apology for either the interpretation or the inconsistency, for his aim is not to exhibit either originality or consistency, but to interpret to others that message of life which more than half a century of study in and meditation upon the life and teachings of the Master have interpreted to him.

## CHAPTER II

### I GIVE UNTO THEM THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM [1]

I WAS ordained to the Christian ministry in 1860, my first pastorate was in Terre Haute, Indiana, and almost my first pastoral activity was the organization of a Congregational Bible Class for the study of the Life of Christ. Its membership included men and women of every variety of religious opinions, some of them not in my congregation. One elderly gentleman was a Calvinist who always doubted whether he had been elected, another brought up under the religious instruction of Dr. Furness in Philadelphia and Theodore Parker in Boston, believed with the latter that a "perfect man" was but the dream of silly school girls. There were two rules and only two for the government of the class: the first, that every member was absolutely free to express his opinion without hindrance; the other, that while the freest inter-

[1] See Appendix I.

change of opinions was encouraged, debate was not allowed. We studied the Life together in a quite frank and, I believe, very honest endeavor to learn from the original narratives what we could of the character, mission and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. We all had our prejudices but we could not assume them to be true. Whatever belief any one of us entertained he must be able to make clear to himself in order to make it clear to his neighbor. These prejudices, freely presented but neither attacked nor defended and never treated otherwise than with respect, had a tendency to neutralize one another. In such an atmosphere I found necessity for much more severe study than I had ever known in college. My original conception that Jesus Christ was the founder of one of the four or five great world religions, that this religion had in its foundation a well defined theology, a church organization and a form or forms of worship, and that the present variations in creed, church organization and forms of worship are either corruptions which have crept into the church or unessential and permissible variations, was rudely shaken in that first year of joint study. Subsequent studies have not

reëstablished that conception. They have overthrown it.

I no longer regard Jesus Christ as the Founder of a system; I regard him as the Giver of life. I still think that the various Christian creeds, rituals and churches are instruments more or less honestly intended to promote in the community the spirit and teachings of Jesus Christ. But I do not think that any creed or combination of creeds can adequately define Christian thought, or that any forms of worship constitute an adequate expression of Christian experience, or that any church or all churches united can be an adequate instrument of Christian activity.

There lies before me as I write the creed of Plymouth Church (Brooklyn) adopted in 1848. It is no longer subscribed by its members, but in 1860 assent was still required, and it fairly represents the theological opinions of liberal orthodoxy at that time. It affirms belief in one true God, Sovereign, Infinite in Power, Wisdom and Goodness, in the Bible as an authoritative rule of faith and practice, in the Trinity, in the Fall of Adam and in the

vicarious atonement. I had been commissioned as a Congregational minister, part of whose duties it was to teach a system of theology of which these articles were an essential part. But when I came to study the teachings of Jesus with my fellow students in this Congregational Bible Class, I found that he never mentioned vicarious atonement or the Fall of Adam or the Trinity, and while he often quoted the Old Testament and always with a respect if not with a reverence which he never paid to the traditional teaching of the synagogue, he never apparently relied upon it as an authoritative rule of faith and practice. He said little or nothing about the Power or Sovereignty of God, but much about his Fatherly care and forgiving kindness; nothing about a Trinity, though much about his own spiritual oneness with his Father; he condemned in no uncertain terms the sins of his time but never traced them back to Adam; he said much about self-sacrifice, but nothing about priestly sacrifice to atone for sin. He never offered sacrifice himself and never counseled his disciples to do so; and never required or referred to any sacrifice as a condition of the

forgiveness which he freely offered in his Father's name to those who wished to abandon their sin and escape from their bondage to it.[1]

It was not, however, merely a Congregational polity and a Congregational creed which I failed to find in the teachings of Jesus; I found there no system of ecclesiasticism and no system of theology. Ecclesiasticism is defined by the Century Dictionary as "devotion to the interests of the church and the extension of its influence in its external relations." I did not find in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ any devotion to the interests of the church or the extension of its influence in its external relations. Theology is defined by the Century Dictionary as "the science concerned with ascertaining, classifying and systematizing all attainable truth concerning God and his relation to the universe." I did not find in the teachings of Jesus Christ any endeavor to classify or systematically define all attainable truth concerning God and his relations to the universe. He was neither a priest nor a rabbi,

[1] His direction to the leper in Mark 1:44 was to fulfill a sanitary regulation which required a leper to get a health certificate from the priest before the ban was removed and he could again mingle with people.

and it was brought against him as an accusation by his critics that he had never received a theological education. He did not choose the companions of his ministry from either priests or Rabbis; he and his companions were lay preachers and neither he nor they performed priestly functions. He urged upon his disciples the privilege of prayer and he attended the synagogue services on the Sabbath day, but he never urged public worship as a duty on others, and he was as ready to preach in the private houses, in the fields, or from the prow of a fishing boat as in a house dedicated to the worship of God. Apparently all places were equally sacred to him.

Nor did I find in Christ's teaching any provision of a new theology or a new ecclesiastical system to take the place of the old. He made no attack on the religious forms or institutions of his time though he evidently did not regard them of vital importance. Born a Jew, he remained a Jew to the day of his death, yet he commended a Roman centurion as possessing greater spiritual faith than any orthodox Israelite he had ever seen, and told his hearers that there were pagans who would go into the Kingdom of God and there were Israelites who

would be cast out. His teaching was not theological but vital. He taught men, says one of his earliest disciples, how to live — soberly, righteously and godly, looking for the appearing of God. It has grown increasingly clear to me with the passing years that the most radical difference between the teaching of Jesus Christ and that of the churches is this: Jesus taught men how to live; the churches have taught men what to think: Jesus tested men by their lives; the churches have tested them by their beliefs.

The notion that Jesus organized a Christian church to take the place of the decaying Jewish church has very little evidence to support it. The word church occurs only twice in the Gospels, and the Greek word means assembly or mass-meeting. It would not be inapt to translate it "town-meeting".[1] In Galilee, finding the time too short and the work too large for his own unaided ministry, Jesus selected twelve from among his followers and commissioned them to preach in the villages while he preached in the cities.[2] Later, in the larger

[1] See next chapter.

[2] Compare Matthew 9:35, 11:1, Luke 9:6.

region beyond Jordan, he selected seventy itinerant ministers for a similar work.[1] The commission was essentially the same in both cases. In neither case was there a hint in the appointment that it was permanent, or that the ministers were to appoint successors, or were to continue their work after the designated service had been rendered. In neither case were the directions which he gave of a kind that are applicable to our time, and no church of our time endeavors to conform to them.

That he prescribed baptism and the Lord's Supper as permanent ordinances appears to me to rest on an equally slight foundation. Almost the sole evidence to support this opinion is the fact that they early became church ordinances, and the assumption that he must have foreseen and intended what in fact came to pass.

The history of baptism, as it is related to the teaching and preaching of Jesus Christ is very simple. Among the ceremonial washings common among the Jews, probably the one to which they attached the greatest importance was the baptism of proselytes. When a pagan desired to become a

[1] Luke 10: 1–17.

Jew, he was immersed in water as a sign that he washed away his old sins and his old superstitions and emerged a new man. He was said to be born again. He ceased to be a pagan; he became a Jew. When John the Baptizer began his ministry, it was with the declaration that the Jew needed cleansing no less than the pagan. You call yourselves, he said, children of Abraham. God could make out of the stones at your feet as good children as you are. To emphasize his teaching he called on them to be baptized and reënter the Church of God as though they had been pagans. So in our own time a civic reformer, denouncing the corruption of the people, might call on native Americans to take out naturalization papers and so renew their vows of loyalty to their country. Jesus at the very beginning of his ministry insisted that John should baptize him; not — this is clear from their dialogue — because he needed to be purified, nor because he thought there was any purifying value in the water, but because he wished to identify himself in the public mind with the one moral reform of his time. In spirit and purpose he was one with John the Baptizer, though not, as he afterward explained, in

doctrine and method. While he remained at the ford of the river Jordan, preaching with John the Baptizer the necessity for a national repentance, his disciples, who had themselves been the disciples of John and had been baptized by him, adopted his symbol, though Jesus himself did not, and they do not appear to have employed it after they left the Jordan — at least there is no record of their having done so. After his resurrection he gave them their commission, Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. But this was not a direction to baptize with water and use a prescribed formula. In fact the disciples apparently did not ordinarily use this formula. They baptized in the name of Jesus.[1] It was a direction to bring all peoples into personal relations with the universal Father as he is interpreted by the life of his son and by fellowship with his spirit. He required not a sign but the life signified by that sign; and to the existing symbol, with which they were familiar, he gave a new significance. That this new significance imposes that symbol and a particular method

[1] Acts 7:38, 8:15, 10:48, 19:5; Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27.

of its use upon the church for all time does not seem to me a tenable proposition. The sacredness of baptism rests upon its antiquity as a rite and its fitness for its purpose. Certainly since it was never administered by Jesus Christ himself, it can hardly be called a part of the ecclesiasticism of Jesus Christ.

Nor can the Lord's Supper be so regarded.

The passage of the Red Sea by the Children of Israel was celebrated by a supper. This paschal supper was a family, not a church, festivity. The father administered it and originally himself killed the lamb for the table. No priest had any official part in it. Just before his death, Jesus Christ arranged to sit down with his especial friends at this paschal supper. He, who was not a priest, presided at the table as the father of the household. He took the occasion to give his friends some last words of counsel, of inspiration, and of affection. And he asked his disciples that thereafter, when they sat down to the paschal supper, they should make him, as it were, their guest; and that they should not merely recall the deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea, but should remember him — his life, his love,

his sacrifice. Did his words mean anything more? Perhaps. Perhaps they meant a request that for all time his disciples should make him their guest; that for all time they should break bread with him and renew their pledge of loyalty and love; that every household meal should be a sacred meal. But surely this request for love is despoiled of its highest meaning when it is transformed into a command for a ceremonial observance. Surely, whether it be complied with in a meeting-house or a cathedral, kneeling before an altar or sitting in a pew, in a sacred church or in the more sacred home, administered by a priest or, as the Last Supper was administered, by a layman, it is not a church ordinance but a family festival, truly called a "Communion" because it is a feast of sacred fellowship, truly called a "Eucharist" because it is a thanksgiving of sacred love. It cannot be counted a part of the ecclesiasticism of Jesus Christ.

The institutions of Christianity, however important they may be, were not framed by Christ and imposed on his followers. They were gradually developed by his followers after his death.

The story of the life and teachings of Jesus

Christ carried out into the pagan world by his disciples appealed to universal instincts of humanity. That story inspired aspirations before unknown and showed that they could be realized; it created a new ideal of life by portraying it as a realized ideal; it awoke slumbering desires and transformed them into a resolute purpose. It did more; it came to the poor, the slave, the outcast and the despairing as Jesus had come to Lazarus and, like Lazarus, they came forth from their tombs, but still bound hand and foot with grave clothes. Christianity converted paganism, but paganism changed Christianity. The new life took on the forms of the old. Statues of pagan gods were renamed for the Bible heroes and Christian saints; pagan temples were converted into Christian churches; pagan festival days were retained as Christian holy days; pagan ceremonies were preserved but rechristened and given a new significance. The Christian Brotherhoods took on the form of organizations with which people were familiar. In Greek communities, where the democratic town meeting was not unknown, the churches were democratic or Congregational. In Jewish communities the converted

synagogue became a Christian church, but adopted the form of the synagogue, which was Presbyterian. As soon — and it was very early — as two or more churches in a city or moderately sized district came to coexist side by side, coöperation was desired in the interest of both fellowship and efficiency, and the minister of one of these churches became either by natural preëminence in character or by the choice of the others, an overseer over all the churches, and so the bishopric grew up. As the Christian religion became the official religion of Rome, it adopted the Roman form of government; the bishop of Rome became the head of an imperial church and bishops and archbishops became its provincial governors.

The teaching of the church inevitably felt the same influence. Christian thought could not affect pagan thought without being in turn affected. Paul warned his disciples against mistaking philosophy for religion, loyalty to opinion for loyalty to a Person, conversion of the intellect for the conversion of the will:— but his meaning was uttered in vain. In the Apostolic times the one condition of joining the Christian Brotherhood was loyalty to

Jesus and baptism as a symbol of enlistment in his cause. By the sixth century the imperial church had substituted for this simple expression of fidelity to a Person the Athanasian creed with its incomprehensible definition of the Trinity "which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved." Christianity had not wholly ceased to be a life, but it had become a system, and acceptance of the system was accounted essential to salvation. More importance was attached to baptism than to dedication to Christ's service. More importance was attached to the proper celebration of the Lord's Supper than to that fellowship of all Christian disciples with each other and with their Master of which the Lord's Supper had been a symbol. More importance was attached to a correct understanding of the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice than to the practice of self-sacrifice. More importance was attached to belief in the Trinity than to a divine life of faith and hope and love, that is, to a life of vision, aspiration and service. The apostle James had said that pure religion and undefiled is "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the

world." But there are even to-day many Protestant churches and many Protestant pastors who regard regular attendance on church services on Sunday and on prayer meetings during the week as better evidence of Christian piety than either keeping oneself free from the spirit of worldliness or visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction. The Christian church has provided itself with theological meat and ecclesiastical raiment and has too often regarded the raiment as more than the body and the meat as more than the life. Paul defined the church as the body of Christ through which Christ has to carry to its completion his divine mission. The church has defined itself as a "congregation of faithful men in which the Word of God is preached and the Sacraments be duly administered," and it has now proposed to attempt a union of all the churches of Christ on four foundations — the Bible; two historic creeds; the two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and the Episcopate. The notion that this would open the door to all believers can hardly be entertained by any thoughtful Christian. There were Old Testament saints before the Old Testament and New Testament

saints before the New Testament; the glorious company of the apostles and the noble army of the martyrs existed for many years before any creed was formulated; the church has produced no more devoted followers of Jesus Christ than such saintly Quakers as John Woolman and John G. Whittier; and the Episcopate has furnished no greater preachers of the Gospel than those of the Puritan, the Moravian and the Methodist churches.

Jesus gave to his disciples no creed; but he inspires them with an ambition to study the invisible world to which they belong and of which they are a part and their beliefs respecting this world they have expressed in creeds. He prescribed for them no ritual; but he inspires in them the experiences of penitence, reverence, gratitude, and consecration, and these experiences they have expressed in rituals. He organized no church; but he gave them work to do which they could do only by united effort, and the organizations which they have created for that purpose are the church.

Are we then to consider the church as a human or a divine institution? I reply, divine in its mission, divine in the spirit of life with which its

master endows it; but human in its forms of belief, of worship, and of organization. This two-fold character of the church has given to it a strangely contradictory character and career, and to that aspect of its character and career and the causes which have produced it I next direct the attention of the reader.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION

ONLY twice in the four gospels does the word church occur, and in only one of those instances do the words of Jesus throw any light on what the nature of that church should be. But before turning to these passages it is necessary to guard against a common error in reading the New Testament. We naturally give to the words there the meaning which they now bear; but this is often quite different from the meaning which they originally bore. Thus the word church calls up to our mind a picture either of the Protestant Church with its pulpits and its preachers or of the Catholic Church with its altars and its priests. But to suggest an idea analogous to either picture Jesus would have used the word synagogue or the word temple. The word *ecclesia,* rendered in our English version "Church," was in earlier versions rendered Congregation, and when used in the Greek version of the

Old Testament it is still rendered Congregation. In the Old Testament, as in classical Greek, it signified either a mass meeting of the people or a popular assembly representing them, somewhat resembling the American House of Representatives or the English House of Commons. Bearing this fact in mind, we may now turn to the passage in Christ's Teaching in which he indicates the foundation of his Church or Congregation.

Jesus had been preaching for about a year, and the twelve disciples had been accompanying him, listening to his preaching, doing a little preaching themselves, and gradually learning the truth which he had come to proclaim. He had taken them apart by themselves, partly for rest, partly for personal religious instruction,—the first of those "Retreats" which have been not any too frequently held by his followers since. He pursued the Socratic method. He asked them, "Who do men say that I am?" "Some that thou art John the Baptizer; some Elijah; others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But who do ye say that I am?" To this question one of the disciples answered, "Thou art the Messiah, the son of

the living God." This answer Jesus accepted. "Blessed," he said, "art thou, Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven. And I say also unto thee that thou art a rock, and upon this rock I will build my Israel,[1] and the gates of Death shall not prevail against it."

To this somewhat enigmatic utterance three different interpretations have been given. Catholics have said that Christ founded his church upon Peter, or at least upon the Apostles, and that to them he gave supreme authority and conferred upon them the right to transmit their authority to others; and they define the Church of Christ as a body of disciples whose leaders have received this apostolic ordination transmitted from generation to generation. The difficulty about this interpretation is that Christ says nothing here or elsewhere about any successors to Peter or the Apostles, and that there is no indication in the New Testament that they

[1] "If we may venture for a moment to substitute the phrase, Israel, and read the words as "on this rock I will build my Israel" we gain an impression which supplies at least an approximation to the probable sense."—F. J. A. Hort, D.D., "The Christian Ecclesia."

ever exercised the authority claimed by the modern priesthood.

Protestants have interpreted Christ as meaning that Peter's confession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the son of God is the foundation of the Christian Church, and that any church which accepts this doctrine is sound and any church which repudiates it is unsound. The foundation then is not a person but a doctrine. The difficulty about this interpretation is that it does not interpret. It rubs off the slate that which Christ had put upon it and puts something else in its place.

The third interpretation of this passage is that the foundation of Christ's church is not Peter's doctrine of Christ, nor Peter and the twelve as officers in an organization not yet formed, but Peter as a type of humanity transformed by the inspiration which he had received from a year of intimate companionship with Jesus.

Simon, the son of Jonah, was of all the apostles the one who had the least stability of character. He was not a rock; he was a wave of the sea. It was he who said, "Lord, bid me come out to thee upon the water," but who, making the venture and begin-

ning to sink, cried, "Lord, save me." It was he who said, "I will never deny thee; I am ready to go with thee to prison and to death"; and then rushed into the Court of Caiaphas with audacity, only to deny his Master with oaths at the first temptation. It was he who was the first to preach the Glad Tidings to the Gentiles and yet, when the hierarchy came from Jerusalem, was frightened and refused even to eat with the Gentiles. To this vacillating man Jesus says, "I will make a rock of you, even of you." If he could make a rock of Simon — and Simon's subsequent life shows that Jesus did so — he could make a rock of any one.

What Christ says then is, not I will build my church on you and your successors, nor, on what you have said, but, on you as a man transformed by the power of an indwelling Christ; on you as a type of a long line of humanity changed by companionship with me through the coming ages.

This is the interpretation of Christ's saying afforded by its setting. This is also Peter's own interpretation. Writing years after to his contemporaries, he says,

> You have had a taste of the kindness of the Lord: come to him then — come to that living Stone which men

have rejected and God holds choice and precious, come and, like living stones yourselves, be built into a spiritual house, to form a consecrated priesthood for the offering of those spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.[1]

This is a very mixed metaphor, but these apostles were so full of the new life that in giving expression to it they paid little attention to the rules of rhetoric. In Peter's thought the Church is both a living church and a stable church, a progressive church and a rocklike church. So he said, It is built upon living stones and out of living stones; a church of living spirits built upon a living Christ.

And as this is the natural interpretation of the text and the interpretation of Peter himself so it is the interpretation given to it by history. The great leaders of the church, almost without exception, have been men transformed by their spiritual experience of fellowship with a companionable God:— John, a son of Thunder, wishing to call down fire from Heaven on the Samaritan village, and a self-seeker, going in the very last hours of Jesus' life to ask of him the first office in his

[1] James Moffat: "Translation of New Testament."

kingdom, but transformed into the beloved disciple and the preacher preëminent for his message of peace and love; Paul, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, transformed into the eloquent herald of the glory of the liberty of the children of God; Augustine, transformed from a roué into a saintly theologian; Luther, called from the monastery to become the founder of Protestantism; Wesley, the High Churchman, made, in spite of himself, the founder of a great free church; John B. Gough, rescued from a drunkard's fate to become the apostle of temperance; Henry Ward Beecher, bred in the school of an iron-clad Puritanism to become a leader of the Puritan churches from their bondage unto law into the liberty wherewith Christ makes free. There is scarcely in all the history of the church a captain of its industries or a framer of its thought or an inspirer of its life who has not known the transforming power that was shown in Peter, who has not been changed, manifestly, and before the eyes of all mankind, changed that he might lead others into a larger and more Christ-like life.

This interpretation of a passage confessedly

enigmatical is illustrated and further confirmed by one of Christ's parables.

As he approached that Valley of Death which each one of us must at last pass through alone, he had a great desire for one hour of quiet companionship with his friends. From one of his secret followers in Jerusalem he borrowed an upper chamber that he and his disciples might, as a family, take their last meal together undisturbed. He made one final effort to recover Judas Iscariot from his crime, but in vain, and unable longer to endure the traitor's presence, bade him go and fulfill his design. Then with characteristic self-devotion he set himself to prepare his disciples for the tragedy of the morrow. He told them that he was about to die, and used his unfailing courage to impart courage to them. You will leave me, he said, to face this hour alone; yet I shall not be alone for the Father will be with me. I shall seem to leave you alone; yet you will not be alone, for the Father will give you the strength-giving spirit he has given to me and that spirit will abide with you forever. You will not see him but you will know him because he will be in you as he has been in me. You will think me

dead; but I shall not be dead. I will come to you and you will share my imperishable life with me. And my Father will come and we will dwell with you and bring peace to you. And then he gives in a simple and to them familiar figure his interpretation of the Israel of the future, borrowing the figure from the Hebrew Psalmists, one of whom had, in the exile, sung of the vine which Jehovah had planted.

Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt:
Thou didst drive out the nations, and plantedst it.

Thou preparedst room before it,
And it took deep root, and filled the land.

The mountains were covered with the shadow of it,
And the boughs thereof were like cedars of God.

It sent out its branches unto the sea,
And its shoots unto the River.

Why hast thou broken down its walls,
So that all they that pass by the way do pluck it?

The boar out of the wood doth ravage it,
And the wild beasts of the field feed on it.

Turn again, we beseech thee, O God of hosts:
Look down from heaven and behold, and visit this vine.

To this cry of the seemingly deserted Israel, Isaiah's use of the same figure furnishes a reply:

Let me sing for my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he digged it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor hoed; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for justice, but, behold, oppression; for righteousness, but, behold, a cry.

In the days preceding the Last Supper Jesus had recalled to the multitudes in the temple this ancient figure and had compelled from the people their condemnation of the rulers of Israel: "The Lord

of the Vineyard," they had said, "will destroy those wicked men and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen who will render him the fruits in their season." And Jesus had commended their verdict: "The Kingdom of God," he said, "shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Now, speaking to his disciples to revive their hopes and inspire their courage, he recalled to their minds this familiar parable of the vineyard, and gave to it a prophetic interpretation:

I am the true vine. My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away. And every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it that it may bring forth more fruit. Already ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. Because apart from me ye can do nothing. In case any one shall not have abided in me he has been cast out like the branch that is withered, and they gather them together and they are burned. If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Therein is my Father glorified; so that ye shall bear much fruit and shall become my disciples.

This is the fullest description which Jesus has left to the world of his ideal for that Brotherhood to which he has committed the completion of his commission. The members have organized themselves into different worshipping congregations separated by the variety of their theological opinions, expressed in creeds, and the variety of their tastes and temperaments, expressed in rituals. These Christian organizations are sometimes treated in religious writing as though they were one and are called the Church, or The Holy Catholic Church; but the Christian Brotherhood out of which they have all grown is more than the Church or all the Churches combined. It is founded not on agreement in opinion, that is on a creed, not on agreement in forms of worship, that is on a ritual, not on agreement in the form of organization, that is neither on an hereditary priesthood nor on a democratic congregation, nor even on love for a sacred but long since buried Messiah; but on love and loyalty to a living Messiah, forever incarnate in the hearts and lives of his disciples, in a more intimate companionship and with a far wider and mightier influence than when he trod the earth with the few

score of faithful friends whom he gathered about him.[1]

This prophetic parable giving Christ's interpretation of what the Christian Brotherhood should be, interprets and is interpreted by the history of the Christianity. The little seed has become a great tree. The little band of twelve has grown to such proportion that it is counted by millions. The Brotherhood that had no purse nor scrip, nor even so much as two changes of raiment apiece when they went forth on their travels, is now endowed with a wonderful equipment. There are no edifices in the world more splendid than some of the edifices which this Brotherhood has constructed. There are no schools of learning better than those which this Brotherhood has endowed. It has spread over the globe, so that to-day there is scarcely any language in which the praise of their Leader is not sung; scarcely any community in which his word is not proclaimed; scarcely any spot where men do not

[1] For the sake of greater clearness I will in this chapter use the word church or churches to indicate the visible worshipping congregations with their creeds and rituals, and the word Brotherhood to indicate the spiritual and invisible fellowship out of which all the churches have grown.

gather to honor his name, and to strengthen themselves the better to do his service. The influence from this band overruns its boundaries. Belief in the Leader, belief in a good God who rules the world, is no longer confined to the professed successors of these twelve. It is difficult to tell who are within the Brotherhood and who are without it, because the faith of the Christian church has become the faith of the Christian community, and the principles of the Christian church are, in some measure at least, accepted by those who do not profess to belong to it.

It is true that the prosperity and progress of the church has been its peril. While it has been pushing its influence out into the world, the world has been pushing its influence into the church. Deeds of avarice and cruelty have been strangely interwoven in the fabric of its history with deeds of unselfish devotion and self-sacrificing love. It has been both narrow-minded and large-hearted; both divided into petty sects quarreling over forms of words and united in world-wide service by love for its Master. Whenever it has lost that love; whenever it has substituted

an admiration of beauty for a reverence of goodness, emotional enjoyment for self-denying service, regulation of conduct for inspiration of the spirit, belief in a creed for faith in a Person, whatever its wealth, its political power, its prestige, whatever the beauty of its services, the regularity of its order, or the soundness of its theology, it has ceased to be a living church, and has had pronounced against it the condemnation uttered nineteen centuries ago against its prototype: "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Nevertheless, no organization has been so enduring, so world-wide in its influence, so beneficent in its service, so deathless in its vitality as the Christian church. And wherever it has gone it has sown the seeds out of which have grown hospitals for the sick, asylums for the poor, schools for the ignorant, liberty supplanting despotism, a reverence of love supplanting the reverence of fear, and, growing clearer with the passing of time, divine ideals of courage, chivalry, charity and brotherhood unknown before. It has been attacked

by ruthless persecution from without and by feuds and factions not less ruthless from within. Again and again its usefulness has seemed to come to an end, and it has seemed to die a death from which there could be no resurrection; again and again it has been entombed, the rock door of its tomb has been sealed and its enemies have declared its power ended; and again and again it has risen from the dead, cast off its grave clothes and entered upon a new life.

In the first century Nero thought that he had killed the infant child, and three centuries later the successor of Nero proclaimed Rome a Christian empire. In the Middle Ages the Christian Church had adopted not only the outer form but the persecuting spirit of pagan Rome, and the splendid cathedrals became its tomb and the jeweled robes of its priests became its grave clothes; yet all the while its deathless life inspired the Preaching Friars laying in England the foundations of England's future liberty, and the self denying sisters of mercy and charity precursors of the Red Cross of the then distant future. In the eighteenth century the Protestant Church seemed dead in

England. The Cross was on the spires of the cathedral but not in the lives of the clergy; the preaching was an ethic as uninspiring as that of Confucius; the religion of Dean Swift was no more Christian than the infidelity of Bolingbroke; the most famous moral teacher of his time, Archdeacon Paley, defined virtue as "doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God and for the sake of everlasting happiness." And yet out of this decadent church issued the enthusiasm of Wesleyanism in England and of Moravianism on the Continent. The nineteenth century saw dogmatism within the church and agnosticism without unconsciously joining their forces to destroy the church which was the only confessed defender of the truth and of the vitality of spiritual experience, and the century was called by friend and foe alike the "age of skepticism." And yet it is in this age of skepticism that the Christian church has given birth to the Young Men's Christian Association, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Salvation Army and the Red Cross, and their work has furnished the most luminous illustration the world has ever seen of the spirit of him who laid down

his life for us that we might lay down our lives for the brethren.

Jesus told his disciples that, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them." Whenever two or three are gathered together united by their love and loyalty to Jesus Christ as their Master and by their common purpose to carry on the work which he has left his followers to do, he is their comrade, and their organization is a part of his great Congregation, a branch of the vine of which he is the life. The church, as he defined it, is much more than a body of Christian disciples possessing the same or similar beliefs, rituals, and form of organization, as the Roman Catholic, the Episcopal, the Presbyterian or the Congregational church; it is something more than a visible and organic body of believers united by their acceptance of the creeds and some of the forms of worship of primitive times. The church, as Christ defined it, is the entire body of all those who are Christ's comrades in the work which he is carrying on in the world, united by their fellowship with one another and their faith in him.

Christianity is more than the institutions of Christianity. An institution is but a corpse if it does not embody a living spirit; form without spirit is always lifeless; language is but idle words if it is not a vehicle for thought or feeling; the kiss may be a symbol of treason as well as of loyalty; the palace without love is a hovel, the hut which enshrines love is a home. But it is also true that spirit without body is almost as useless. Love in the heart inspires no one if it is not expressed; unexpressed thoughts are of little service to him who possesses them and of no service to others. The Declaration of Independence would have been of no value if there had not been men willing to fight for it and die for it. Christianity is the spirit of Christ; the Christian Church is its imperfect embodiment. The institutions of religion are not religion; but religion would be almost wholly ineffective if it were not for its institutions.

The work of the Christian Brotherhood is not ended and will not be ended so long as there is wickedness to be fought and human need to be helped. And never before was this Brotherhood more Christian in its essential spirit than it is to-

day. Are there hungry men? By this Brotherhood charity ministers to them? Are there sick? By this Brotherhood hospitals are built. Are there insane? This Brotherhood has taught men that insanity is not a crime. Are there criminals? This Brotherhood has taught that crime is a disease and the criminal is to be cured while he is punished. In many a distant village or remote prairie at home, in crowded cities and in scattered populations in foreign lands, men inspired by this hope, animated by this purpose, and following their Leader, are attempting to bring about the Kingdom of God upon the earth, giving themselves to an unrewarded ministry, and accepting the opportunity for service as itself the best of all rewards.

What is the condition of belonging to this age-long and world-wide Brotherhood united solely by that love which is the bond of perfectness, Christ has made clear: "Ye are my friends," he said, "if ye do what I have commanded you." Obedience to Christ's commands is the only condition which Christ has prescribed for membership in the Christian Brotherhood. What are his commands I ask my reader to consider in the chapters which follow.

## CHAPTER IV

### I AM COME TO PREACH GLAD TIDINGS TO THE POOR

JESUS in a single sentence has defined the mission of his followers: "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." He calls on his followers to carry on in successive generations, with his companionship and under his personal but invisible leadership, the work he was commissioned by his Father to do. What that work is he at different times and in different language has explicitly stated.

The earliest of these statements is contained in his first reported sermon preached in the synagogue at Nazareth, in which he declared that he had come to fulfill the prophecies in the Old Testament of a kingdom of God on the earth, and that a distinguished feature of that kingdom would be a new spirit of philanthropy.

He came to Nazareth where he had been brought up: and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the

Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach glad-tidings to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. . . . And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Both the teaching and the practice of Jesus interpret this definition of his mission. His religion was a religion of humanity. He came to give a new creative impulse to benevolence and so a new meaning to human life. He put the heretical but humane Samaritan above the callous priest and Levite. He pictured life as an estate left by an absentee landlord in the care of a steward who would be tested by his treatment of the tenants. The nations accounted those great who wrung service from their inferiors; Christ accounted those great who rendered service to others. He esteemed no acts of genuine good-will insignificant. Two farthings in a contribution box or a cup of cold water to a thirsty pilgrim, if the gift of a generous spirit, he accounted an act of religion. To the men

and women whom society, then as now, regarded as outcast sinners he brought promise of pardon and hope of a new life. But the man who devoted himself to accumulating and investing wealth he called a fool; and he declared that hell would be the doom of the rich man who feasted sumptuously every day and left the beggar at his door uncared for, and of the Pharisee who devoured widows' houses and for a pretense made long prayers. In the only description of the last judgment which he ever gave, he declared that the Judge would measure men, not by their creeds, their church attendance, or their scrupulous observance of prescribed rituals and ordinances, but by their treatment of their fellow-men. The fact that they had never known him and were not conscious that they had rendered him any service would not condemn them. The fact that they had known him and confessed him as their Lord would not save them from condemnation.

His life illustrated his teachings. He gave himself with utter abandon to the service of others. Were they hungry, he fed them; sick, he healed them; crazy, he restored to them their recovered

minds; ignorant, he taught them; in despair, he brought them hope; isolated from their fellow men by their pride, he pierced the walls of their prison house with sharp invective. No service was so lowly that he was unwilling to render it. Once his disciples who had been out all night fishing and were disheartened by their failure, when they came on shore found that he had cooked their breakfast for them. Once they had walked the dusty streets of Jerusalem with sandaled but unstockinged feet, and had hotly contested their respective rights to places of preëminence at the supper table. He waited till they had settled this important problem, then he girded himself with a towel as their servant and washed their feet himself. Finally, he freely offered up his life for enemies who hated him and for companions of whom one betrayed him, one denied him, and the rest, with one exception, abandoned him.

Nor was it merely the unhappy condition of the common people which moved his sympathy. At the very outset of his ministry he perceived clearly that the secret of the highest happiness and of the most poignant sorrow is in the spirit of man; in

his character, not in his condition; in what he is, not in where he is. He saw clearly that he could not fulfill his mission by merely feeding the hungry. Even if he turned the stones into bread the relief would be but slight and temporary. Heart hunger is more difficult to bear than bodily hunger. The blessed are not the rich but the lowly in spirit; not the sorrowless but those who are strengthened by their sorrows; not the grasping who acquire much, but the unselfish who inherit from their Heavenly Father what he chooses to bestow upon them. Alas for you rich! he cries, for you have received your consolation. Alas for you that are full! for you shall hunger. Alas for you laughing ones! for you shall mourn. Alas for you of whom all men shall speak well! for so did their fathers of the false prophets. These four types of men whom we are apt to envy,— the rich, the full, the merry and the popular — Christ pities. The rich, not because he is rich, but because he has gotten that for which he has been striving; the satisfied because he has no aspirations; the laughing ones because life is serious and they never take life seriously; the man whom all men praise because all men never praise the man

who with courage and real power is making the world better than it has been.

Jesus looked upon the crowds of ignorant men and women with compassion; not chiefly because they were poor, oppressed or hungry, but because they were a prey to demagogues, ill led and unprotected, like sheep without a shepherd. Neither their ignorance, their weakness nor their sins alienated him. Sin he counted a disease; an insane conscience was to him like an insane mind. The Son of Man he said has come to seek and to save the lost — to seek not merely to save those that sought him, to call to repentance, not merely to answer the repentant when they called. And in these sayings as we shall see more fully later, he was interpreting the spirit of his Father.

Animated by this spirit, Jesus not only preached in the open fields and in private houses wherever he could find an audience, but he visited in the homes of the despised tax gatherers and the outcast sinners and sat at the table with them. The Pharisees called him the friend of publicans and sinners, in which saying they unwittingly told the truth; and a glutton and a wine bibber in which they con-

sciously lied. And yet, did they lie? Or were they simply unable to conceive why any one should attend a feast of publicans and sinners unless he was attracted by the chance to eat and drink without restraint? Even in his indignation against pride and false pretense Jesus was pitiful. By his public invective against the men who devoured widows' houses and for a pretense made long prayers, he endeavored to pierce the fortress which their pride had erected and he ended his invective with a cry of lamentation: "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

No one will claim that benevolence was born in the first century. Pity for the suffering, mercy for the wrong-doer existed in the world before Christ. But in his birth they were reborn. From being an incident, the service of the needy gradually became, wherever the influence of Jesus Christ went, one of the great objects of life. Mr. Lecky in his "History of European Morals" has eloquently contrasted pagan and Christian philanthropy, from which volume I quote the following sentences:

> The greatest things are often those which are most imperfectly realized; and surely no achievements of the

Christian Church are more truly great than those which it has effected in the sphere of charity. For the first time in the history of mankind, it has inspired many thousands of men and women, at the sacrifice of all worldly interests, and often under circumstances of extreme discomfort or danger, to devote their entire lives to the single object of assuaging the sufferings of humanity. It has covered the globe with countless institutions of mercy, absolutely unknown to the whole pagan world. It has indissolubly united, in the minds of men the idea of supreme goodness with that of active and constant benevolence. It has placed in every parish a religious minister who, whatever may be his other functions, has at least been officially charged with the superintendence of an organization of charity, and who finds in this office one of the most important as well as one of the most legitimate sources of his power.

But the skeptic need not go back to the past for an illustration of the power of Christ to awaken in human souls "The Enthusiasm of Humanity." Christ declared one object of his mission to be "to set at liberty them that are bruised." A great nation inspired by the spirit of service has given its money, its food, its sons and daughters, to set at liberty a people who were being cruelly bruised by oppression. The fact that Catholics, Protestants, Jews and agnostics have all united in this service gives evidence that the Christian spirit has over-

flowed all the bounds set by creeds, rituals, church ordinances, and church organizations.

Nor is this a mere transient enthusiasm produced by the war. It has been intensified by the demands of sorrow and suffering brought to our consciousness by the war, but it existed before the war broke upon us with its sad surprise and it continues after the war, though the cannon have ceased their clamorous demands. There never was a time in the history of the world when so many men and women were engaged in varied endeavors to relieve and succor their suffering fellow-men. Look once more at these words of Jesus defining his mission and compare with them what men and women of our time, of every sect and of none at all, are doing to fulfill that mission, often with no consciousness that it is a Christian mission which they are fulfilling and that the spirit which inspires them came from the Man of Nazareth.

It is this Christ spirit which inspires the movement throughout Christendom not merely to ameliorate the sufferings of the poor but to abolish poverty. The social reformers of our time are not always wise in their methods nor Christ-like in their spirit.

Too often social reform has been marred by class envy, jealousy and greed. Nevertheless the Christ spirit has animated many single-taxers who have attributed all poverty to the private ownership of land, many socialists who have attributed it to a false organization of productive industry, and some political teachers who have endeavored to inspire their scholars with the ambition to cure poverty by bringing about a better distribution of wealth.

It is this Christ spirit which has inspired society with the endeavor to discover some form of help for every form of physical handicap,—limbs for the lame, eyes for the blind, hospitals for the sick, institutions for the defective and the insane.

It is this Christ spirit which marvellously animating at the same time Russia, England and America, abolished in the last century serfdom from Russia and slavery from the West Indies and the United States.

It is this Christ spirit which has inspired what is inadequately termed prison reform, but what is nothing less than an endeavor to provide a cure for crime, not merely a punishment, to fit punishment to the criminal rather than to the crime and so make

the object of criminal law the protection of the community and the cure of crime, not the gratification of revenge.

It is this Christ spirit, seeking by a common effort to save society from the ignorance which imperils it, which has created and maintains the public school; has established social settlements; has inspired the better forms of socialism; and has sent thousands of Christian teachers, doctors and preachers to carry into foreign lands and into the poorer portions of our own land, the message of Christ's sermon at Nazareth.

When Jesus breathed upon his disciples and said "Receive ye the Holy Spirit," he did but symbolize that inspiration which, by his teaching, his life, and his unseen but not unrealized companionship, he has been giving throughout the centuries in his loyal friends and followers, and what he then said to the eleven, he has been saying to all who love him and love the truth and life which he has exemplified: "As the Father hath sent me into the world, even so send I you into the world." They who have accepted this commission, though they never knew who gave it to them, they who have accepted

this spirit of love, service and sacrifice, though they knew not whence it came, are his followers. There have been in the church many an ambitious Caiphas and many a greedy Judas who were none of his; and there have been without the church many a repentant and generous Zaccheus who have made him their guest without knowing whom they entertained, and many an heretical Good Samaritan who has manifested by his life the spirit of Jesus though he worshiped not in Jerusalem.

These works of charity have not been prescribed by rule or required by law. They have been a spontaneous activity of an inward spirit. They are an evident fulfillment of Christ's second definition of his mission. To that definition I next direct the reader's attention.

## CHAPTER V

### I AM COME TO GIVE LIFE

As FAR back as I can remember I always wished to be a Christian. But I curiously failed to understand what the Christian life is. I thought to be a Christian meant to live in obedience to the laws of God. But when I compared my life with the laws of God as embodied in the Ten Commandments and said to myself what the rich young ruler said to Jesus, "All these things have I kept from my youth up," I had to add this question, "What lack I yet?" From that feeling of lack I could never escape. In fact without knowing it, I was a Jew, not a Christian. Perhaps I should say a Christian Jew. For I found in the teachings of Jesus, as, for example, in the Sermon on the Mount, a higher standard of character than in the Ten Commandments. As I studied not only his teachings but his life, the desire to be like him increased, but the difficulty of conforming my life to this higher

standard also increased. As I look back upon that epoch in my life, it appears to me that I was like a pupil in a sculptor's studio. There was before me the work of a master. I imagined that I was plastic clay and had to model myself into a copy of the orignial. But I found that I was not plastic clay, and however conscientiously I tried to reproduce the original, I always failed.

It was not until at about eighteen years of age I came under the influence of Henry Ward Beecher's preaching that I began to understand that Jesus Christ is not a lawgiver but a lifegiver, and that one is not a Christian because he obeys the laws of God, but he obeys the laws of God because he is a Christian. This change in my conception of the Christian life was gradual. I cannot recollect how and when it began, though curiously I can recollect some apparently insignificant incidents which contributed to it. One was a little booklet by Dr. Mahan entitled, if I remember aright, "The Fox-Hunter," based on the verse in the Song of Songs: "Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines." Another influence was a sentence picked up somewhere in my reading, attributed to Augus-

tine: "Please to do right; then do as you please." But the sentence which most clearly gave to me the clew to the true interpretation of the Gospel as interpreted by Jesus Christ in his teaching and by Paul in his Epistles, is the second definition which Jesus Christ gave of his mission: "The thief cometh not but for to steal and to kill and to destroy; I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."

Religion has often, I think has generally, been a restraint, a hindrance, a prohibition upon life. Such was the religion of the Pharisees in the First Century, of the ascetics in the Middle Ages, of the Puritans in the Seventeenth Century. That notion of religion Jesus repudiated. Whatever lowers vitality, lessens life, narrows it, impoverishes it, by whatever name it is called, whatever authority commands it, is anti-Christian. Christ declared his mission to be to develop life, enlarge its sphere, increase its activities, ennoble its character. The life which he comes to impart transcends all definitions. Paul is not speaking of a future heaven but of a present Christian experience when he says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have

entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Not because it is a perfect definition, but because it is the last I have happened to light upon in my reading and is wholly free from theological phraseology, I quote the following sentence from the Journal of Henri Fredéric Amiel:

> As I understand it, Christianity is above all religious, and religion is not a method, it is a life, a higher and supernatural life, mystical in its root and practical in its fruits, a communion with God, a calm and deep enthusiasm, a love which radiates, a force which acts, a happiness which overflows. Religion, in short, is a state of the soul.

The religion of Jesus Christ is a religion of liberty, not of law; of affirmations and inspirations, not of negations and prohibitions. For "Thou shalt not" Christ substitutes "Thou canst." Thus his Gospel is called the "power of God" because he inspires us to believe that in companionship with God we can accept our aspirations as divine guides and can hope that our ideals can in time be by us realized. Judaism said "No idols"; Christ says, "God is spirit; worship him in spirit and in truth."

Judaism said "Thou shalt not steal"; Christ says "Give to him that asketh of thee." Judaism said, inflict on the wrongdoer no greater injury than he has inflicted on the wronged—"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"; Jesus says, resist not the wrong; overcome his evil by your good.

To interpret these as commands is wholly to mistake their meaning. They are inspirations. The laws of Christ are not commands imposed from without, exacting obedience; they are interpretations of an inward life, endowments with a God-like power, promises of a divine perfection. Their meaning is made clear by the conclusion to which they lead: Ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; ye can become perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect. The Sermon on the Mount, which has been so often misinterpreted as analogous to the Ten Commandments, only more spiritual, contains the promise of divine life as a free gift from the Father to all who seek it: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give the spirit of holiness to them that ask him?"

It is extraordinary to what extent the law of taboo has found its way into the teaching of the church despite the teaching of its Master. The church has prohibited dancing; Christ never refers to dancing except with implied approval. The church has urged fasting and discouraged feasting; Christ did not fast and never declined an invitation to a festivity. The church has frowned upon fiction; Christ was a past-master in the art of story-telling. The church has prohibited thinking; Christ habitually provoked men to think for themselves, sometimes by calling on the questioner to answer his own question: "Who, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" Sometimes by putting questions to his congregation and inviting their answer: "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?"

The church has often prescribed rules for the regulation of conduct. Jesus Christ prescribed no rules; he inculcated principles; and he inspired his disciples with a new spirit of life. Rules are temporary; principles are permanent; and the spirit of faith and hope and love is eternal. It knows no limitations of time or space. The minister is con-

tinually asked to-day "Where shall I draw the line?" The answer of Jesus Christ would be "There are no lines." He would not teach that knocking balls around a green lawn is right because that is croquet and knocking balls around a green table is wrong because that is billiards. He would not teach that cards are right if you have historical names on them and wrong if you have spades and hearts on them. He would not teach that it is right to have a tableau or a charade in a church sociable and wrong to see a play given by professionals in a theater. He would not teach that it is wrong to wear precious jewels and right to wear precious flowers. He would teach this: No enjoyment is right that does not help to develop manhood and womanhood; and no enjoyment is wrong that does help to develop manhood and womanhood. What is luxury? A comfort that enervates. What is comfort? A luxury that does not enervate. The life is more than meat; the body is more than raiment. Personality is more than things. All things are right which contribute to character; all things are wrong which deteriorate character.

But Christ not only inspired this life by his teaching, it radiated from his person.

There is power in law enforced by police. There is greater power in truth which fits the door of the mind as the key fits the lock and gains entrance to the fast locked soul. There is still greater power in example, which is truth expressed by action. But the greatest power of all is that of a great personality. Psychology has never disclosed its secret or explained the nature of its operation. No educator can impart it. It is not inherited; its possessor cannot bequeath it to his children. It made Thomas Arnold a great teacher, Robert E. Lee a great general, Abraham Lincoln a great leader, Phillips Brooks a great preacher. It is not consciously put forth; it insensibly emanates. I once knew a woman on whose gravestone might well be inscribed the text "Blessed are the peace-makers." I do not know that she ever intermeddled in a quarrel; but in her presence turmoil was an impertinent intrusion, and to her home we came as to a sanctuary whither the worries and the strifes of life could not follow.

This power of personality Christ possessed to an

eminent degree. Alone he faced the desecrators of the Temple and they fled before him. Unarmed he faced the mob and it parted and gave him a safe passage. Officers came to arrest him and returned only to report their failure because, Never man spake like this man. Men who lived with him were transformed by their companionship. Peter, impulsive, ardent, self-confident, pushing forward into a forewarned danger and denying his Lord when that danger was imminent, became rocklike in his steadfastness, and when brought before the Jewish Council answered its order forbidding him to preach with, "We ought to obey God rather than man," and followed it with a forbidden Gospel sermon on the spot. John, by nature so vociferant that he was called a "son of thunder," and so ambitious that on the last journey of his Master to Jerusalem he sought for himself and his brother the first places in the anticipated kingdom of God, became the preëminent apostle of gentleness and love. And Thomas, so resolutely skeptical that he would not accept any evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, when vanquished by his Master's personal presence uttered the supremest confession

of faith recorded in the New Testament in his greeting, "My Lord and my God."

This power of inspiring personality did not cease with his death. Transmitted to his disciples it has remained the one greatest single influence in the history of the world for the last eighteen centuries. It has always overflowed the boundaries of the church and often exerted its influence in spite of the hostility of the ecclesiastics. The church has rarely comprehended the nature and extent of the influence which its Master has had upon mankind. If we want to know what is the life which he came to give, we must ask history what is the life which he has given.

To depict accurately the change in the life of the world which has been wrought by the influence of Jesus Christ would be quite beyond the limits of this chapter, as it would be quite beyond the power of the writer. But it is possible to suggest some aspects of that influence. Its effect on man's understanding of God and of the life acceptable to him and so of the nature of both private and public worship, I shall consider in a future chapter. Its effect on man's political and social life I have

already briefly indicated. It has given him faith in himself and in his supremacy over nature and is giving him faith in his fellow man as a child of God. The statement in the opening chapter of Genesis that God made man in his own image and gave him dominion over the earth and its forces and inhabitants is the secret of all scientific progress; the statement of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, "Be ye not called Master for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren," is the secret of all social progress. Slowly finding its way into the consciousness of the human race, it is substituting a democratic brotherhood for a feudal aristocracy, developing a widening and a spiritual charity, organizing public systems of education, inspiring a mutual interest and a mutual respect, creating a public opinion almost wholly unknown in the ancient world, and thus laying the foundation for free popular governments which can exist only when they are based on a common intellectual and moral life.

The effects of Christ's influence on four chief symbolical expressions of the inner life of man — architecture, painting, poetry and music — is less

frequently recognized, but if more indirect is scarcely less apparent.

It might be thought that a religious faith that God does not dwell in temples made with hands would be fatal to church architecture. Such, however, was not the case. The early Italian churches were in some cases pagan temples, as the Pantheon at Rome, or imitations of the pagan temples. But as the Christian church, moving northward, escaped from the dominating influence of Roman paganism, it created a new architecture for itself. The term Gothic, applied to it originally in derision, has become the accepted designation of this type of architecture, which was, however, so distinctive in its character, and so evidently inspired by religious motives, that it might well have received the designation which excellent authority has proposed to give it — Christian architecture. The cathedrals of Europe have well been called frozen music; they are symphonies of praise in stone. The dominant motive of the architects, builders and workmen was religious, as the dominating motive which inspires and shapes our railroad stations, factories and skyscrapers is commercial. Thus each type of

architecture interprets, because it expresses, the life of the people who have created it. The interpretation of the Gothic which Ruskin gives in his "Seven Lamps of Architecture" has been criticized, perhaps justly; yet every impressionable mind must have felt in such edifices as the cathedrals of Cologne, Rheims, Salisbury, and Canterbury that sevenfold message of sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, life, memory and obedience, which Ruskin has discovered in them. Nor is it fanciful to see in their aerial brightness an expression of the gladness of heart and in their spires and pinnacles and pointed arches a symbol of the heavenward aspiration of the worshipers who gathered within their walls.

The first aim of the nascent Christian church was to tell men the story of Christ's life. It saw in Christ the ideal of humanity and in every incident of his life an inspiration for his followers. This story could not be told by the pen, except to the few, for the many could not read. It was told to the many by the brush, for every one could see and could comprehend the picture. Mrs. Jameson, in her "History of Our Lord as Exemplified in Works of Art," has shown how the whole history of that

life, from the Nativity to the Resurrection, was told by artists. And every picture was a sermon. That the first great pictures were of religious scenes and were painted for the church, is not due to the mere fact that the church created a commercial demand for them. Christianity had inspired a recognition of the value of the deeper life of the spirit, and it was inevitable that as soon as culture was Christianized the artist should invent a new medium for the artistic interpretation of this deeper life. "It is Christianity," says Charles Blanc, "which has supplanted sculpture by placing beauty of soul above that of the body."

With the birth of painting came the birth of a new kind of poetry. In the "Te Deum Laudamus," which is known to have been in use from the beginning of the sixth century, with adoration are mingled the tenderer feelings of penitence, of personal affection and of confident trust, unknown in even the best of Greek and Roman poets. Nor is it only sacred hymnology which has felt the effect of the Christian life. Not only in Dante's "Inferno," "Purgatorio," and "Paradiso," not only in Milton's "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Re-

gained," not only in Whittier's "Eternal Goodness" and Longfellow's "Christus" is that influence to be seen, but scarcely less in the note of human experience found in such poems as Tennyson's "In Memoriam" and Browning's "Ring and the Book"; and that this difference is not wholly due to intellectual development is apparent to any one who will compare with them the exquisite paganism of Shelley's verse.

Still more apparent is the influence of Christianity on music. Professor Edward Dickinson interprets well this influence in his statement that a new energy entered the art of music when enlisted in the ministry of the religion of Christ, because a new spirit, unknown to the Greek, the Roman and even to the Hebrew, had taken possession of religious consciousness. The word music, as it occurs in Greek and Latin literature, means something very different from the meaning now attached to that word. Little is known of the art as it was practiced among either the ancient Greeks and Romans or among the Hebrews, but it was certainly of a most primitive description. The works on music in Greek did not concern the art as we understand it, and pagan

Rome is not known to have produced a single work on the subject, nor did it add anything to either the knowledge of music as a science or the practice of music as an art. Music as we now know it, with melody and harmony, did not exist prior to the Christian era. Its existence is primarily due to an endeavor to find some fitting vocal expression for the emotions which Christianity had called into being. It is a gift of Christianity to mankind. Thus it is that though the Founder of Christianity is not known to have written a single verse, or a line of music, or to have drawn a picture or planned an edifice, music, poetry, painting, and architecture were all new born in his birth at Bethlehem.

It may be said with confidence that there would neither be a commercial credit system, nor a post office, nor a public school system, nor political nor industrial liberty if the world had never known the influence of Jesus Christ, since they never have existed where that influence has not been known. Architecture, literature, painting, music, material progress, political freedom and the social order all owe an inestimable debt to Jesus Christ, and they are all witnesses to the life which he has given to

the world. Every material, visible, audible thing in modern life is Christian in so far as it possesses the Christian spirit. The Sistine Madonna is no less truly Christian than the Apostles' Creed; Bach's Passion music is no less truly Christian than the Catholic Mass or the Puritan prayer meeting; the Salvation Army is no less truly Christian than the church, whatever the history of its orders. There is no more reason why a Christian congregation should be confined to the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed as a statement of its faith than why it should be confined to the psalms of David in its praises or to a reproduction in its windows of the pictures on the walls of the catacombs.

But neither civilization nor ecclesiasticism are Christianity. It is the spirit of love, service and sacrifice; love for his fellow man, the service of his fellow man, sacrifice for his fellow man; the life inspired by the love of God for his children, the service of God for his children, the sacrifice of God for his children. It is the life of God in the soul of man. It is in the creed but it is more than all the creeds; in the worship but is more than all the rituals; in the institutions of a free people but

is more than all their institutions. In all the activities of the so-called Christian Church as in all the activities of the so-called Christian State, it is alloyed with traditionalism, superstition, ignorance and selfishness. It is power, liberty, life working its way out in imperfect media and in spite of conscious and unconscious hostility into its final and perfect expression. It comes as spring comes, which melts the ice and sets free the brooks, clothes the earth with its garment of green, decorates it with flowers and begins to prepare the summer and autumn fruits; but spring is more than singing brooks and growing grass and promise-bearing buds. The Christian life can no more be confined within a church and its creeds, its rituals, and its activities than spring can be confined within a favored garden by a fence. A reverent skepticism may have in it more of the spirit of Christ than an irreverent credulity. Voltaire in making war against a cruel superstition falsely labeled Christian may have been as truly serving God in France as John Wesley in preaching the freedom of the Gospel in England. The passion of philanthropy in our time — healing the sick, teaching the ignorant,

comforting the sorrowful, and fighting the battles of justice and liberty for the whole world — is as truly a revival of Christ's religion as any that was ever nurtured under church roofs. He who, inspired by the divine life of love, service and sacrifice, is carrying glad tidings to the poor, deliverance to the captive, sight to the blind, and liberty to the bruised is a follower of Jesus Christ.

What is the secret of the life which Jesus Christ bestowed upon the world by his teaching, his example and his person, he tells us in his fourth definition of his mission. Just before his death Jesus called his disciples together for a last conference, and he brought that sacred conference to its close by a prayer which produced so profound an influence upon his disciples that one of their number subsequently wrote it down and years afterward gave it to the world. In the opening sentences of that prayer Christ pours forth out of a full heart a solemn thanksgiving to the Father for the mission with which he has been entrusted, and thus expresses the very secret of that mission: "Thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast

given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

What eternal life means to others, what it should mean to others, I have neither the ability nor the ambition to tell. This is simply a narrative of what it has meant to me in my life, and here I interrupt the narrative in order to indicate in the next chapter the message of the Old Testament prophets who have helped me by their message to understand the mission of the Christ.

## CHAPTER VI

### I AM COME TO FULFILL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

Professor William James in his interesting volume on "Varieties of Religious Experience," thus summarizes his survey of the field of religion: "The warring gods and formulas of the various religions do indeed cancel each other; but there is a certain uniform deliverance in which religions all appear to meet. It consists of two parts: (1) An uneasiness; and (2) its solution. The uneasiness, reduced to its simplest terms, is a sense that there is *something wrong about us* as we naturally stand. The solution is a sense that *we are saved from this wrongness* by making connection with the higher powers."

There are then two questions which religion has to answer: First, What are the higher powers? Second, How shall we make proper connection with them? Before considering the answer of Jesus to

these two questions of religion, What are the higher powers, and How can man make proper connection with them to remedy the present wrongness, it is necessary to consider the answer of Judaism, which Jesus came to interpret and complete.

In studying the life and literature of the ancient Hebrews as portrayed in the Old Testament the student should always bear in mind a simple principle which has often been ignored, alike by the critics and the eulogists of that collection. The Old Testament represents the developing life of a people through a period of at least a thousand years. It therefore portrays the crudities, the errors, and the vices of a people out of which they have been led, no less than the principles inculcated by their leaders. And in the Old Testament the defects in the national character are depicted with extraordinary fidelity. But in attempting to estimate the influence of any people upon modern thought and life we do not measure that influence by the ignorances, superstitions, and falsities of the common people, but by the truths which their great leaders have interpreted. We do not think the

message of Great Britain has been absolutism because the Stuarts were absolutists, nor that the message of America is the righteousness of slavery because at one time in its history it maintained an almost pagan slave system. England is interpreted by its overthrow of the Stuarts and America by its emancipation of the slaves. The slaughter of the Canaanites and the imprecatory psalms are not a part of the message of Israel. They indicate the native savagery of the people and make more luminous the message of their prophetic leaders.

And this message itself was a developing message. The truth of God grows in the mind of a race as in the mind of an individual. In measuring the character and influence of a nation, we have to consider, not its condition at any one stage of its progress, but the direction in which it progressed; not the opinions of its majority, but the ideals of its leaders.

The Hebrew prophets were not the first monotheists. The great thinkers in all ages of the world and in all forms of religion have tended toward belief in one Infinite and Eternal Energy. This was the philosophy, if it was not the faith, of the

spiritual aristocracy of India and of Egypt in periods prior to any history of Israel which we possess. On the other hand, it is quite certain that in the early history of Israel the people believed in many gods; they rested content in the conviction that their God, Jehovah, was superior to the gods of the peoples round about. And it is by no means certain that this popular opinion was not for a time shared by some of their eminent leaders.

What was peculiar to the ancient Hebrews was their faith in a human God. The pagan nations with whom they had any acquaintance looked through nature to nature's god. Nature was to them the symbol and the interpretation of the Deity. Nature, therefore, in its various manifestations, was the object of their reverence. Nature reverence took on a great variety of forms, from the worship of the sun to the worship of the sacred ox or the sacred beetle. Israel from the very beginning of its history was led elsewhere for its symbol and interpretation of Deity. Its prophets looked, not through nature to nature's god, but through humanity to humanity's God. Signs of polytheism there are in Israel's history — that is,

the recognition, if not the adoration, of many gods; but there are no signs of nature worship except in occasional scathing condemnation of it as a departure from the faith of the fathers. The philosophers have coined a long word to represent this faith in a human God; they call it anthropomorphism, from two Greek words, meaning in the form of man. The religion of Israel was frankly anthropomorphic.

This, their fundamental faith, does not merely appear in the declaration of the first chapter of Genesis that God made man in his own image. It is easy to put too much emphasis on a single text. That conception of creation might have been, and perhaps was, borrowed from a foreign and earlier source. But the whole Jewish conception of God, life, and duty rested on and was developed out of this idea — that it is within, not without, in the intellectual and moral life of man, not in the forms and phenomena of nature, that man is to look for his interpretation of the Being whom he is to reverence and obey.

This belief is implied in the visit of the three angels of the Lord to Abraham in his tent; in

the report that Jehovah wrote the Ten Commandments with his finger on the tables of stone; in the appearance at Jericho of the captain of Jehovah's host as a man with drawn sword in his hand; in the similar appearance of the Lord of Hosts, in the Temple, to Isaiah; and in the vision of the Son of God in the fiery furnace with the three Hebrew children. It is implied in the figures of prophet and poet, who compare God rarely to any physical object, habitually to a human life. Like as a shepherd shepherdeth his sheep; like as a king ruleth over his people; like as a father pitieth his children; like as a mother comforteth her child — these and such as these figures direct the thoughts of Israel inward in their search for the Eternal. The customary prophetic phrase, "Thus saith Jehovah," inevitably suggests a human God speaking to his earthly companion.

Nor was this conception confined to the seers and prophets. It characterized the Temple service. In the Holy of Holies of all heathen temples a symbol of the Deity was enshrined. Such a symbol was enshrined in the Holy of Holies of the Jewish Temple. But there it was not an image of a phys-

ical object, but a symbol of a human experience. The symbols of the Deity were the Ten Commandments and the Altar of Mercy. Thus the Temple repeated the message of the prophets, saying, Would you know whom to worship? Look within. Worship the God who is interpreted by the law written in your conscience and by the compassion which you feel for the suffering and the sinful. It is not power, it is justice and mercy, which make Jehovah worthy of your reverence and your loyalty.

As the Jewish religion thus taught its votaries the humanness of God, it taught also, and by the same figures, the divinity of man. Man was made in the image of God; into man God has breathed the breath of his own life. Man is the offspring of God. Thus the same fundamental conception of man's origin and nature taught the ancient Jew the approachableness of God and the dignity of man. And this aspect of man's inherent worth and dignity is not dependent on a single text. It is implicit in the whole religious and political history of Israel. It is involved in the doctrine of possible fellowship between God and man, which is

perhaps the most distinguishing note of the Old Testament. God is something more and other than a Creator and Ruler concealed behind nature; he is the Friend and Companion of man, and gives him law and counsel and comfort. Jehovah, said the Psalmist, is my shepherd. He leadeth me beside the still waters. If I stray, he restoreth my soul. If I come into darkness and the valley of the shadow of death, he goes with me there. He is my refuge and my fortress. Unknown he may be; but I can dwell in the secret place of the Host High: I can abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

And he is represented as with Israel not only in his hours of devotion but in his common tasks. It is he who inspires the artisan to devise cunning works in gold and in silver, to cut the stone and carve the timber and embroider the cloths for the Temple service. It is he who teaches the farmer how to plow and harvest and sow his fields and how to thresh his wheat and winnow it. It is he who enables the warrior to run through an opposing troop and leap in his flight over an obstructing wall; he who enables the hunter to scale the dangerous precipice. So close is his companionship with Israel that

to commune with one's own soul is to commune with him. "Jehovah will hear when I call upon him. Stand in awe and sin not; commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still." [1] "To the Jew," says James Cotter Morison, "God is the Great Companion, the profound and loving, yet terrible, friend of his inmost soul, with whom he holds communion in the sanctuary of his heart, to whom he turns or should turn, in every hour of adversity or happiness." [2] All this implies not only faith in God, it also implies faith in oneself as being of kin to God and fitted for companionship with him.

But did not Israel believe that the race had fallen and in that fall had lost this companionship? No! There is not the least evidence that the Israelitish people held any such opinion. There is in the third chapter of Genesis a parable of sin and fall, which truly interprets the individual experience of every soul when it steps aside from the path of innocency; but there is nothing in that chapter to indicate that the writer of it believed that the whole human race sinned in Adam and fell with him in the great

[1] Psalms 23:91; Exodus 31:1-10; Isaiah 28:23-28; Psalms 18:29-32, 4:3, 4.

[2] "The Service of Man," p. 181.

transgression. No such doctrine is to be found, either expressed or implied, in the religious teachings of the Old Testament. There is not, after the third chapter of Genesis, from Genesis to Malachi, any reference to the fall of man; nor any in the New Testament except incidentally and by way of suggestion in two of Paul's letters. It is a curious illustration of the unscripturalness of much of our theology that this doctrine of a historic fall and resultant depravity, which has been made one of the foundation stones of Christian theology, has nothing in the Bible to support it except a parable in the Old Testament and a parenthesis in the New Testament.

It is because man is thus of kin to God that he can understand the law. That law is addressed to his reason and his conscience. It is always portrayed as a reasonable and a just law, which is only another way of saying that it appeals to man's reason and sense of justice. In truth, the law was not something external given to him; it was an interpretation to him of his own nature. The law was the law of his own being; its enunciation by the prophet was simply an interpretation to him

of himself. He had only to look within to find its verification and its sanction. Jehovah is portrayed by the author of the Book of Deuteronomy as saying to Israel:

> For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. . . .

This was the fundamental teaching of the prophets of the Old Testament — that God dwells with man and dwells in man.

This truth is dramatically illustrated in the experience of Elijah. Disappointed by the failure of his attempted reformation of religion, finding the worship of Baal very much alive although many of the priests of Baal had been slain, his life threatened by the Queen, himself deserted by the people, depressed and hoping for death, he was summoned by Jehovah for an interview at Mount Horab. The great convulsions of nature which he

witnessed fitted his mood but brought him no message. A tempest swept through the valley and broke in pieces the rocks, but Jehovah was not in the wind; an earthquake followed, he was not in the earthquake; volcanic fires flamed from the ground, he was not in the fires. But when all had passed by, and a great quiet followed, a still small voice spake to him. And the still small voice was the voice of his God and brought him God's message.

This truth that God dwells with man and in man is interpreted in Israel's declaration that he whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain dwells in the man of a humble heart and a contrite spirit. And it interprets the universal presence of God as expressed in such a passage as the 139th Psalm:

Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
or whither shall I flee from thy face?
If I climb up into heaven, thou art there,
or if I make Hades my bed, lo, thou art there.
If I lift up the wings of the dawn,
and settle at the farther end of the sea,
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
and thy right hand take hold of me.
And if I say, "Let deep darkness screen me,
and the light about me be night,"

Even darkness is not dark with thee,
but the night is clear as the day —
the darkness is equal to the light.[1]

God's presence is intimate, continuous, inescapable. Man cannot escape from God because God dwells in man and man cannot escape from himself.

This faith of the Hebrew prophets that God is a human God we must comprehend if we would comprehend the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth as they were seen, understood and interpreted by his disciples after his death. To an interpretation of that life and teaching I invite the reader in the next chapter.

[1] F. Cheyne's translation.

## CHAPTER VII

### I HAVE MANIFESTED THY NAME

In the Episcopal version of the Psalter occurs this sentence: "Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for: Thou art my hope even from my youth." That sentence expresses what has been my longing from my youth, and that longing is satisfied by Jesus Christ.

When I began my systematic studies in the life of Jesus of Nazareth I had an imaginary conception of God as an always just and sometimes merciful king, sitting on a great white throne, ruling the universe, to whom I might send my prayers by a kind of wireless telegraphy, though wireless telegraphy was not then known, and from whom I might get responses chiefly through either the church or the Bible. I really worshiped an idol, though made of imagination, not of wood or stone. As I pursued my studies in the life of Jesus, his life and character more and more inspired my reverence and

love. Long since that spiritual idol has disappeared from my temple, and its place has been taken by the God who has been revealed to me in the earthly life and character of Jesus of Nazareth. No character that I can imagine, no character that I can build up out of the scattered fragments furnished by history and literature, can for a moment compare in my thought with what James Martineau has well called "the realized ideal" which that life and character furnish to the world. Discussions between the Unitarians and the Trinitarians have been largely upon the question what is the metaphysical relation between Jesus Christ and the Father of whom every family in heaven and earth is named. I do not know what that metaphysical relation is. I do not care to know. It is enough that to me Jesus Christ is the supreme manifestation of the eternal God, not the manifestation of one part of him or of one office which he performs in the world, not more the manifestation of his mercy than of his justice, not more the manifestation of his tenderness than of his authority, but the manifestation of the truth that God is Immanuel — that is, God with us.

To state an experience in the terms of philosophy is always difficult, yet my philosophy and my experience are so intermingled that I cannot separate them. I may perhaps express them thus: The veiled, invisible figure, that is always walking through life, always judging, befriending, forgiving, helping men, was for one moment made so clear that human eyes could see him and human hands could handle him; then hidden from human eyes and escaping from human touch, he has become the nearer to us because he is invisible and intangible.

Jesus came to a people trained through centuries of religious teaching, alike by the instructions of their prophets and by symbols in their temple, to believe that God had made man in his own image and therefore in man men were to look for the image of God. In his teaching Jesus assumed this Jewish point of view. He did not attempt to conduct his disciples through nature to nature's God; he endeavored to conduct his disciples through humanity to humanity's God. He assumed that God has made man in his own image and that in the experiences of human nature we are to

look for an interpretation of God's character. He did not define God or the conditions of fellowship with God, but he brought to his disciples in his life and experience a revelation or unveiling of the God who dwelt within him and thus showed to his disciples the way to fellowship with their Great Companion. For this purpose he took one of the most common and one of the most sacred of human relationships, that between a father and his child. He told them, When ye pray say, "Our Father."

We make a great mistake if we conceive the "Lord's Prayer" to be a form which Christ has prescribed. It is a spirit of approach which Christ illustrates. Look, he says, into your father-heart; it will interpret your Father to you. Do you want to become acquainted with God? Go to him as your children come to you. What are the things you want? Are they not such as the following? You want food for the body, the mind, the spirit. Ask your Father for them. If your son asks of you bread will you give him a stone? You want forgiveness for the wrongs you have done? Do you always exact of your son the full penalty for his

every transgression? Do you demand an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth? If you forgive your children their trespasses, why doubt that your Father will forgive you your trespasses? Are you not often perplexed which road to take in life? Ask your Father for guidance. Do you not sometimes dread a temptation which looms in the distance with threatening? Ask him to lead you by a path which will escape it. Does it not sometimes seem to you impossible to overcome the evil desires within or the seductive influences without you? Ask him to strengthen your will and give you power to conquer the world and your own baser self. Do you want his spirit, the spirit that will enable you to do his will, to do what you can to bring his rule upon the earth? He imparts his own spirit to those that ask him, as you love to impart your wisdom and your strength to your child by your counsel and companionship. There is nothing too insignificant for his concern if it concerns his child. The very hairs of your head are numbered. You are never beneath his notice. He is so great that to him nothing is small. A sparrow cannot fall to the ground and he not know it. And

in the thought of him who made you in his own image, you are of much more value than many sparrows.

All Christ's instructions had for their aim to bring his disciples into fellowship with God. The Westminster Confession of Faith has what may be conceded to be an admirable and comprehensive conception of the Higher Powers:

> There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute.

Christ's instructions contain nothing analogous to this definition. He did not attempt to describe the attributes of God. He did not discuss and he did not give any information concerning such questions as, Is God omnipotent and what does omnipotent mean? Is he omniscient, and what does omniscience mean? The nearest approach to a definition of God which is to be found in Christ's instructions is in the sentence, "God is spirit"; and this definition, if so it can be called, was given only for the purpose of making clear the sentence

which follows, "And they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." It was given for the purpose of showing us that our approach to God does not depend on any particular form or ceremony but wholly upon our spiritual sincerity and earnestness. In brief:

Christ does not teach us about God; he makes us acquainted with God.

John Stuart Mill wrote in 1834 to Thomas Carlyle: "I have what appears to you much the same thing as or even worse than no God at all, namely a probable God. . . . I mean that the existence of a Creator is not to me a matter of faith or intuition; and as a proposition to be proved by evidence it is but an hypothesis, the proofs of which, as you I know agree with me, do not amount to absolute certainty. . . . The unspeakable good it would be to me to have a faith like yours, I mean as firm as yours, on that, to you, fundamental point, I am as strongly conscious of when life is a happiness to me, as when it is, what it has been for long periods now past by, a burden." [1]

No reader of Christ's teachings can doubt that to

[1] "Letters of John Stuart Mill," vol. I: 90.

him God was not an hypothesis but a personal and intimate friend. He did not from a study of the creation arrive at the conclusion that there is a Creator, as the scientist from a study of the arrow heads found in rocks, arrives at the conclusion that there was a prehistoric man. He was acquainted with God as a child is acquainted with his father, and his aim was, not to demonstrate by the scientific method the existence of a Creator, but to impart to his disciples a spirit of filial obedience which would give to them an experience of companionship with God similar to his own. He himself lived in continual and unbroken companionship with God; and he sought to inspire in his disciples a spirit which would enable them to live in a similar companionship.

And he assumed that this companionship with God is not a special privilege of saints or scholars but is the common heritage of all God's children. He spoke to the plain people, not only in language which they could understand but of experiences which they could appreciate and of virtues which they could exercise. The figures he used to illustrate the life of God in the soul of man were

taken from the ordinary vocations of the common people; they were such as a farmer sowing his seed, a fisherman casting his net, a steward faithful to his absent lord, a woman preparing bread for her household, a merchant buying a valuable pearl, a lucky finder of a treasure hidden in a field who sells all that he has to purchase the field. It is of little children whose characters are not yet formed he said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven"; it is to a miscellaneous congregation of all sorts and conditions of men he said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you"; it is of corrupt politicians and abandoned women he said that they should enter the kingdom of heaven before the men whose pretentious piety was worn as a cover for greedy hearts and selfish lives; it is to a woman of the town who had shown her sorrow for her past life by her tears, and her revering acceptance of his message by anointing his feet with ointment that he said, "Thy faith has saved thee"; and he whose last supper with his eleven personal friends we have made a church sacrament, ate also with publicans and sinners in a feast which was not less sacramental.

Thus the faith of Jesus in his Father was a faith

also in his fellow men. He believed that there was in them something of the divine life and that it might be so inspired as to become an invincible power. This faith he showed by carrying not only the message of charity, but also the message of trust and confidence to the plain people. He told them that the Father trusted them and put responsibilities upon them. He made clear to them that the Father does not desire to keep his children in the nursery; that he desires that they grow up into brave, wise, strong men endowed with a noble manhood. And they can become brave only by facing danger, strong only by bearing burdens, wise only by solving problems.

And he made it clear that while God is the Great Ruler of men and their Great Helper and their Great Companion, he will not impose on the indifferent unsought companionship, nor force his help on those who desire to live without it, nor drive into his kingdom those who do not wish to become its citizens. He who desires the Father's counsel must ask for it; he who desires the Father's companionship must seek it; he who desires to be in the Father's kingdom and under the Father's rule must knock for admission.

This truth that the Father entrusts the direction of their lives to his children and gives them at once liberty to choose and responsibility for their choice, Christ illustrates by a very simple but very striking story.

A father had two sons. At his death the property would be divided between them. But the younger son was not willing to wait for his father's death. He was impatient of control, weary of his home and its duties, wished to live his own life, carve out his own destiny, try experiments for himself. He came to his father with the demand, Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me as my share of the inheritance. The father did not refuse. He anticipated his own death, gave his son the inheritance which in due course would later come to him, and let him go forth to try the world for himself. It is thus the Father treats his children. He puts the rudder into their own hands and lets them choose their own course of life.

In teaching this truth, that God entrusts to his children, individually and collectively, the determination of their own destiny, Jesus carried out the earlier teaching of the Old Testament. It is equally

clearly taught in Jehovah's treatment of Israel as a nation and in Christ's treatment of his disciples as pioneers in the church.

When Moses brought the Children of Israel to Mt. Sinai, God did not assume to be their sovereign. He was elected their sovereign by popular suffrage. Before he gave them the Ten Commandments which were to be the constitution of the new nation, he directed Moses to put before the assembly of the people the question whether they would have him as their king. "Thus shalt thou tell the Children of Israel: If ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Moses brought to the Children of Israel this message and "all the people answered together and said, all that Jehovah hath spoken will we do." Not till then was their constitution given them; not till then did Jehovah assume the sovereignty of the nation.

Later, after they had been under the rule of Jehovah for over forty years and had realized the justice, the mercy, but also the inflexibility of his rule, and had taken possession of the Holy Land, the same question was put to the people before

their final settlement: "If it seem evil unto you," said Joshua, "to serve Jehovah, choose ye this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell." And he put before them very explicitly the difficulty of the life to which loyalty to Jehovah summoned them. Again the people voted whom they would have as their ruler. "Nay," they replied, "but we will serve Jehovah."

When some centuries subsequently the author of Deuteronomy put before Israel a later interpretation and amplification of the law, as it had been developed in the life of the nation, while the inevitable result of disobedience was clearly pointed out, the same freedom of choice to obey or disobey was affirmed: "I have set before thee life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

Finally, as the captivity of Israel in Babylon drew to its close, it was left to the exiles to determine whether they would return to their native land and endure the difficulties and privations of a new settlement in a country devastated by wars, or

would remain in comparative comfort in the land in which most of them were born and where they possessed the only home they had ever known. Some went, some remained.

Thus in the four great crises of their history, the responsibility of determining their national destiny was thrown upon Israel by Jehovah.

Jesus Christ dealt with his disciples in the same spirit. He put upon them the responsibility of their lives. After the twelve had been with him scarcely a year, he sent them out two by two, to carry to the villages the same message of the Father's love that he was carrying to the cities, and he left them to phrase that message, each according to his own understanding of it. In one somewhat enigmatical and often misunderstood passage, he told them that he gave them the keys of the kingdom of heaven; life was theirs, they could open what doors they would and what they would they could lock against themselves. After his death he put upon the disciples the responsibility for carrying on to its completion the work which he had begun. You can do the work if you will, he told them, but if not, it will not be done. You

can cure the world of its sins; but if you do not cure it, the world will not be cured.[1] They should have his companionship as he had his Father's companionship. But the work would be theirs, the responsibility would be theirs, the results would depend upon them.

And this in fact has been the case. When his disciples have possessed his spirit, and in that spirit have carried on his work, they have succeeded. When they have lost his spirit, when they have been idle and indifferent, or busy about other things, or have quarreled among themselves, the work has halted, progress has stopped, humanity has suffered.

But it was not only by his words that Jesus taught his disciples. What should be their conduct toward one another he taught them by his own conduct; what might be their experience of God he taught them by his own experience.

The fragmentary narrative of his life afforded by the Gospels gives us interesting indications, not only of the various estimates formed concerning him by the community, but also of the varying esti-

[1] See Appendix.

mates formed concerning him by his disciples. The Pharisees scornfully asked, "How knoweth this man letters having never learned?" He had never studied the Rabbinical books under the theological teachers of his time and knew the traditions of the church only to condemn them. The Messiah they said would come out of the unknown; but as for this fellow — we all know where he came from. A Nazarene! Could any good come out of Nazareth? Nor was Jesus less a puzzle to the common people. They heard him gladly. They were fascinated by the charm of his personality. They wondered at the words of grace which flowed from his lips. But Messiah? Prophet? Rabbi? No! Certainly not at the first hearing did they so judge him. He was nothing but a peasant. A son of the carpenter whose mother and brothers and sisters they knew as their neighbors and comrades.

After he had taught and healed for nearly two years opinions changed somewhat, but the puzzle continued. To some he was John the Baptizer, risen from the dead, to some Elijah or Jeremiah or some other ancient prophet come back

again to earth as a forerunner of the Messiah. One of his more intimate disciples believed him to be the Messiah, and later it is clear that the other disciples held the same opinion, for James and John came with their mother asking for office when he, their king, should have established his kingdom. But when he died their faith died also. They scattered, and some of them went back to their fishing. The story of their master's resurrection brought to them by the women seemed to them as idle tales. Not until their skepticism was overcome and they were convinced of the reality of the resurrection did their vanishing faith that their Master was the Messiah return.

Apparently the first to believe and to teach what we now call the divinity of Jesus Christ was Paul. His study of the Old Testament during his two years in Arabia convinced him that the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament prophecy was the Son of God, and he came out from his retirement to preach in the Synagogues this new interpretation of the ancient prophets and to follow it with the teaching that the Jesus who had been put to death and had risen from the dead was this Mes-

siah.[1] This became the message of the apostles.

The astonishing welcome this message received from the plain people in pagan lands gave life and body to the apostles' faith. It revealed a universal human need to which their message ministered. They remembered the appearances of the Angel of the Lord to patriots and prophets as narrated in the sacred books of their nation, and they began to wonder if they had not been living with the Angel of the Lord. They recalled that strange life and that extraordinary character with its puzzling but glorious self-contradictions: courageous but never combative; gentle but never timid; masterful but never self-assertive; simple in tastes but never ascetic; sympathetic with all men but compromising with none; rejoicing in activity yet seeking solitude; pure in heart yet friend of sinners; patient with wrongs to himself but indignant with wrongs to others; vanquishing a mob by the magic of his presence yet yielding himself up without resistance to the legalized force of an unjust government. They looked back upon a life which more than fulfilled the ideals of character which

[1] Compare Acts 9: 20 with 22.

one of their number portrayed in a prose poem in praise of love. The prose poem might well serve as a biography of Jesus Christ by substituting for the word love his name. Christ "suffered long and still was kind; Christ envied not, vaunted not himself, was not puffed up, did not behave himself unseemly, sought not his own, was not easily provoked, thought no evil, rejoiced not in iniquity but rejoiced in the truth, bore all things, trusted all things, endured all things."

Thus gradually their ancient Jewish faith that God reveals himself to man in man took on a new meaning. They restudied the Hebrew prophets. They recalled the prophet's pen-picture of the Messiah's life: "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; he was oppressed and he was afflicted yet he opened not his mouth." They recalled Isaiah's declaration that the Deliverer of Israel would be called "Wonderful-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Everlasting, Prince of Peace." [1] Was there ever such a wonderful-counselor, divine hero, gracious and patient father, fountain and giver of peace?

[1] See George Adam Smith: Isaiah 11: 140.

Their faith in their master grew with their ministry. By giving their message they gained both clearness of vision and strength of conviction. But it was not until more than half a century after Christ's death, spent in interpreting Christ and the Christian life to others, that John, the clearest in vision of any of the twelve, gave to their faith a definition which, after nineteen centuries, still remains the clearest and most intelligible definition of the Christian's understanding of Christ which the Christian Church possesses: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life; . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."[1]

The New Testament never affirms that Jesus Christ is God.[2] It never uses such language as that of the Nicene creed: "God of God, Light of

[1] I John 1:1, 3.

[2] The language of Thomas in John 20:28, "My Lord and my God," is the language of emotion, not of theological definition.

Light, Very God of Very God; Begotten not made; Being of one substance with the Father." It never discusses or defines his metaphysical relation to the Infinite and Eternal Spirit. The declared opinions of theologians on such questions are their deductions from the simpler and more spiritual faith of the Apostles. That faith is expressed in such declarations as that Christ is God manifest in the flesh, that is in a human life; that he is such a manifestation of the Word of Life as can be looked upon, that is, as is possible in our present earthly condition; that God was *in* Christ reconciling the world unto himself; that through Christ, by our understanding of his spirit, we have access to the Father; that thus we can have fellowship with one another and with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

It is not my endeavor in this book to define a philosophy but to portray an experience. My faith in God, in Jesus Christ, in myself, in my fellow men and in immortality is one single and indivisible faith. Let me see if I can state it simply and clearly.

We live in two worlds—a world of matter, which is under inviolable law; a world of the spirit, which is free. God is a spirit, and is the Father of

our spirits. Jesus Christ is the supreme manifestation history affords of what God is and what we may become. In his life of love, service and sacrifice is the supreme manifestation of that life of the spirit which we can share with him and his Father, an immortal life which the decay of the instruments it uses does not and cannot destroy.

## CHAPTER VIII

### I HAVE COME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THAT WHICH WAS LOST

In our study of the life of Christ in my Congregational Bible class, I early came upon a fact the full significance of which did not at first occur to me, but which eventually led to a radical reconstruction of my theology. I had thought that Jesus Christ bore the punishment of our sins that we might be released from that punishment. But I found to my surprise that in the teaching of Jesus Christ nothing was said about salvation from punishment and much about deliverance from sin. I found two phrases in the New Testament translated forgiveness of sin: one, literally translated, is remission of sin; the other, deliverance from sin. The first regards sin as a burden which is taken from man; the other, regards sin as a despot from which man is delivered. The phrase remission of sins is of frequent occurrence; the phrase remission

of punishment never occurs — not even once. But in classical Greek I could not discover that the phrase remission of sins ever occurred; the word, ordinarily translated forgiveness, signifies compassion or fellow feeling. It began to dawn upon me that Jesus Christ did not promise to deliver the repentant sinner from penalty and did promise to deliver him from sin.

The difference between these two conceptions of salvation may be made clear by a simple illustration. Two companions in a robbery are arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. The first by political influence obtains a pardon, is released after a few months' imprisonment, and returns to his criminal companions and his criminal courses. The other serves out his full term, is converted, looks with shame upon his past life and with aversion upon his past companions, and goes out to spend the rest of his life in honest and honorable service. One is saved from his punishment but not from his sin; the other is saved from his sin but not from his punishment; the punishment is one means of his salvation.

It gradually became clear to me that it was this

second salvation which Jesus Christ offers to the world and which makes his life, teachings and sacrifice Glad Tidings. His message as understood by his apostles, is interpreted by such verses as:

Thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins.

Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

This cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins (literally remit or send away our sins) and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Then I went back to the Old Testament. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is generally and justly regarded as the chapter in the Prophets which more than any other foretells the character and the mission of the Messiah. It declares that the Messiah hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, that he has been wounded because of our transgressions and bruised because of our iniquities, and that on him the Lord has laid the iniquity of us all. But it does not affirm that he has been punished

because of our transgressions, nor that the Lord has laid on him the punishment of our iniquities. It affirms that he has suffered and that with his stripes we are healed; but it does not affirm that with his stripes we are delivered from the penalty due to our transgressions.

I went back to the earlier history of Israel. I found this truth, that God saves the repentant sinner from his sins illustrated by a curious object lesson. On the so-called Great Day of Atonement two goats were brought out before the Congregation of Israel. One was offered as a sacrifice to Jehovah; the sins of the people were laid in confession upon the head of the other, which was then driven off into the wilderness and seen no more. It was the *sins* which were sent away.

Then I turned to the four Gospels to re-read the story of Christ's life and teachings. I did not find that he anywhere said that he had borne or would bear for his followers the consequences of their misconduct. I did not find that anywhere he promised that his disciples should be relieved from the consequences of their misconduct. But I did find

him teaching explicitly that their sins did not separate them from God's love; on the contrary, he taught them that God sought them in their sins to recover them from their sins.

Turn to the fifteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel and read again the three stories written there:— the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son. What is the meaning of these stories? Is it not that our Father does not wait for us to seek him; that he comes seeking us; that, as Paul has expressed it, God has loved us while we were dead in sins; and as John has expressed it, "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us." Our sins hide God from us, but they do not hide us from God. As sickness attracts the physician to the hospital, as ignorance attracts the born teacher to the pupil, as the negro camp attracted General Armstrong to Hampton, Virginia, as the ignorance and superstition of the tribes in Africa attracted Livingston to the Dark Continent, so our sins attract our Father to us. "People don't love you when you are naughty," said a would-be teacher to a naughty child. "But mother does," was his reply.

"Mother does." And this mother's heart interprets the heart of Him who dwells in and inspires the love of the mother.

What Jesus taught by his parables, he taught by his life. He went seeking the lost, that he might save them, not from their punishment but from their sins. In the two instances in which he saved persons from the consequencs of their sin it was made clear that he did so only that he might save them from their sin.[1] He did not wait, as we too often do, for sinners to come to him in the synagogue or the temple. He went where they were. He spoke to them in figures drawn from their everyday life which they could understand. He opened doors of hope for those against whom the world and the church had closed all doors of hope. He accepted their invitations, shared in their festivities, comforted them in their sorrows and inspired in them new hopes and new purposes. And his message to them was ever the same: "Go, and sin no more." To Jesus a lost soul was a soul not yet found, and his life and his teaching interpreted the spirit of his

[1] John 5: 14, 8: 11.

Father who is seeking and will seek the lost until he find them.

Thus gradually I came to learn one great difference between the Christian form of religious life and all other forms. Other world religions represent man as seeking God; Christianity is the only religion which represents God as seeking man.

Nor did Christ wait for repentance. By his character even more than by his words, he inspired in men both sorrow for the past and aspirations for the future. His life was a continual illustration of the truth enunciated by one of his disciples: "the goodness of God calleth thee to repentance." He did not wait for the corrupt tax gatherers to reform their ways before he accepted their invitations to a feast. He accepted those invitations as an indication of their desire for a better life, and, to the complaints of his critics, replied, "They that be well need not a physician but they that are sick."

A woman of the town came in as a spectator to the house where he was dining. Something in his words awakened in her a spirit of sorrow for the past and of aspiration for the future. Her tears

fell upon his unsandalled feet stretched out behind him as he reclined at the table. She knelt to wipe away the tears with the tresses of her hair; then, unresisted, kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment which such women constantly carried with them. Her hands were not clean nor her heart pure. But she had some desire for clean hands and a pure heart, and Christ asked nothing more, but turned to her with the message, "Thy sins are forgiven."

He was one day passing through Jerusalem, city of priests, city of tax gatherers. The Roman system of taxation was such that no man could be a tax gatherer and not be an oppressor of the people. He was part of an organized system of corruption and oppression. One of these tax gatherers who was short of stature climbed a tree to see the Rabbi whose fame gathered a following crowd about him wherever he went. Christ waited for no expression of repentance, but called to Zaccheus to come down. I will be your guest to-day, he said. He offered his friendship without waiting for any expression of repentance and by his friendship inspired the repentance. Before he

left the tax gatherer's house Zaccheus had promised to restore fourfold to those whom he had plundered by false accusation and to give half of what remained to the poor.

Self-confident Peter, who had resented Christ's warning, followed him to the Court of Caiaphas and there denied that he knew the Master, who was on trial for his life. Jesus did not wait until Peter went out and wept bitterly; but as he passed by to his trial and his death he looked with a penetrating glance of love upon his disciple, and it was this look of love which awakened repentance in Peter's heart and brought bitter tears to his eyes.

Repentance is not the condition of divine love and mercy; it is the condition of divine forgiveness because an unrepentant heart is bolted against the entrance of forgiveness. It is not that God is unwilling to forgive; but forgiveness is deliverance from sin, and it is impossible to lift sin off from a man who desires to hold on to it. God says to every man, "Let go your sin and I will lift it off"; but if the man will not let his sin go it cannot be lifted off.

Is not this deliverance from sin that which in

our better moments we desire for our children, our homes, our nation? Do we not desire for our children that they should be honest, truthful, brave? That their lips shall be unstained by profanity, their hands clean from greed, their hearts unpolluted by foul imaginings and base desires? Do we not desire for our homes that, whether they are rich or poor in their furnishings, peace and good will shall abide in them? Do we not wish for America that she shall be not merely a nation of great cities and great railways, but of freemen living together in accord under the protection of a just government? Not deliverance from the sorrows which sin brings but from the sin itself we crave: that our boys be saved, not from headache but from drunkenness; our homes not from poverty but from quarreling; our nation not from the wounds of war but from the shame of cowardice.

Nature in a parable teaches us what the New Testament teaches in explicit language. Emerson says, "Take what figure you will, its exact value, nor more nor less, still returns to you. Every secret is told, every crime is punished, every virtue rewarded, every wrong redressed, in silence and

certainty." This is but a half truth, and a half truth is generally a dangerous error. It is true that nature's laws can never be violated with impunity, she has no favorites, she is immutable, inexorable. Her laws written in the constitution of the world of matter and in the souls of men are never set aside. She does not remit the consequences of disregarding her laws. But she does repair the hurt. When I was a boy, in careless climbing I broke my arm. Nature did not say, This is a little boy, he meant no harm, and I will not break his arm. But when the doctor set the arm and put it in splints, then nature began to knit the bone together. Nature punishes but it also repairs. When the dyspeptic ceases to violate the laws of health the stomach begins to repair the ravages which he has made in it; when the drunkard abandons his cups the body begins to cast out the alcoholized tissues and bring new healthy ones to take their place. And if nature is unable unaided to repair the wrong there are curative agencies in the world outside ready to give their aid.

This law of healing written in material nature is written scarcely less clearly in the nature of man.

When Christ bids us pray Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, he does not make our forgiveness of others the standard to which God conforms his forgiveness. "What man is there of you," he asks, "of whom if his son asks bread will he give him a stone? If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to him that ask them." Similarly in this prayer he bids us remember that, imperfect as we are, we forgive one another; much more then may we with faith pray that our Heavenly Father will forgive us. It is true that he adds, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." But this is not because the Father will shut his heart up against us if we shut up our hearts against one another. It is because forgiveness of sin is deliverance from sin and the unforgiving soul is not willing to be delivered from its relentless hatred.

The Gospel, then, reduced to its simplest form, may be stated thus: God wishes me to be his son. Do I wish God to be my Heavenly Father? If this is what I really wish, he will take me as I am

and make me what he wishes me to be. All that he asks is that I should wish to be what he wishes me to be. Faith is just the desire to be like God; it is reaching out the hand and taking hold of the stretched-out hand of God.

There seem to me to be a great many Christians in the church who do not understand this Gospel as well as the Hebrew Psalmist did, although he wrote some centuries before the life, teaching and sacrifice of Jesus Christ had made it clear. Listen to him:

Delight thyself also in Jehovah;
And he will give thee the desires of thy heart.
Commit thy way unto Jehovah;
Trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass.
And he will make thy righteousness to go forth as the light,
And thy justice as the noonday.

Delight yourself in God. That is all. Want to want him; desire to have him; when you read the life of Christ say, Yes, that is the kind of life I would like to live, that is the kind of man I would like to be; Lord, make me like him. That is all, absolutely all.

I do not know where this truth is more beautifully told than in Henry Ward Beecher's graphic description of his Christian experience.

I was a child of teaching and prayer; I was reared in the household of faith; I knew the Catechism as it was taught; I was instructed in the Scriptures as they were expounded from the pulpit and read by me; and yet, till after I was twenty-one years old, I groped without the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus. I know not what the tablets of eternity have written down, but I think that when I stand in Zion and before God, the brightest thing I shall look back upon will be that blessed morning in May when it pleased God to reveal to my wandering soul the idea that it was his nature to love a man in his sins for the sake of helping him out of them; that he did not do it out of compliment to Christ, or to a law, or a plan of salvation, but from the fullness of his great heart, that he was a Being not made mad by sin, but sorry, that he was not furious with wrath toward the sinner, but pitied him — in short, that he felt toward me as my mother felt toward me, to whose eyes my wrong-doing brought tears, who never pressed me so close to her as when I had done wrong, and who would fain with her yearning love lift me out of trouble. And when I found that Jesus Christ had such a disposition, and that when his disciples did wrong he drew them closer to him than he did before — and when pride, and jealousy, and rivalry, and all vulgar and worldly feelings rankled in their bosoms, he opened his heart to them as a medicine to heal these infirmities: when I found that it was Christ's nature to lift men out of weakness to strength, out of

impurity to goodness, out of everything low and debasing to superiority, I felt that I had found a God. I shall never forget the feelings with which I walked forth that May morning. The golden pavements will never feel to my feet as then the grass felt to them; and the singing of the birds in the woods — for I roamed in the woods — was cacophonous to the sweet music of my thoughts; and there were no forms in the universe which seemed to me graceful enough to represent the Being, a conception of whose character had just dawned on my mind. I felt, when I had with the Psalmist called upon the heavens, the earth, the mountains, the streams, the floods, the birds, the beasts, and universal being to praise God, that I had called upon nothing that could praise him enough for the revelation of such a nature as that in the Lord Jesus Christ.

All this may be true, and yet the past remains. God may not remember your sin, but you cannot forget it. He may not punish you, but how can you escape your own self-punishment? His promise may remove your fear of the future, but not your sorrow for the past. You shot a poisoned arrow into the heart of your wife. You cannot draw it out: nor can he. You did a dishonest thing: you cannot undo it: nor can he. You can pay the money back, but you cannot undo the dishonesty. The past is past: not even God can change it.

> "The Moving Finger writes: and having writ
> Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all your Tears wash out a word of it."

That is true. Not even Almighty God can make the past other than it is. But God can bring good out of our evil, and he often does. John B. Gough once said to me, "I never come into a parlor where ladies and gentlemen are gathered to meet me without thinking they are saying to themselves, Here comes the man who has twice had delirium tremens; and I never dare to share in a communion service where fermented wine is used lest its fragrance should prove to me an irresistible temptation." He carried the effects of his sin with him to his dying day; but he was saved from the sin of drunkenness and the very painful memory of his past made him all the more effective as an apostle of temperance. The greatest single crime of history was perpetrated when Judas, Caiphas and Pilate conspired to slay the innocent. But out of that conspiracy the world's redemption was wrought.

The history of America illustrates this truth in a very striking manner. The Civil War was an awful

tragedy, and those who are responsible for bringing it on, whether by their ambition, their recklessness, their cowardice, or their carelessness, were guilty of an awful sin. And yet, on looking back we can see now what we could not see then. Before the Civil War a great chasm had been opened between the North and the South. The union of States was one of law, not one of the spirit. The North despised the South as a community of braggarts; the South despised the North as a community of mere money makers. Each said, The other will never fight. But the four years of bloody war created in each section a respect for the other section not known before, and out of a conflict whose wounds we had thought could never be healed came forth a fraternal fellowship which we never knew before.

The memory of our sins will remain. We shall carry it with us even to heaven; but the Apostle John tells us that it will add a new song to the celestial choral: "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." They

remembered their sins in remembering their redemption from sin, as Israel remembered the oppressions they had endured in Egypt in remembering their deliverance and their Deliverer. In both cases the song they sung was a "New Song." And we need not wait for heaven to sing it.

But it is not only the memories of the past which are burdens to us; the present and the future are burdens also. "We have done the things we ought not to have done, and we have left undone the things we ought to have done, and there is no health in us." The evil is still here. And the consciousness that it is here fills us with apprehension for the future. This sense of evil in us, this apprehension of sins into which it will bring us, an apprehension so great as to lead sometimes to despair, this is the last and greatest enemy of all. And to meet this enemy with courage born of hope, the God of the Old Testament and of the New equips us.

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

What shall be white like snow? The sins. What

shall be as wool? The sins. Is this possible? Can our sins become virtues?

It has sometimes been said that there is no good in man. It would be truer to say that there is no evil in him. For there is nothing in man which is inherently evil; nothing which cannot be directed to a good purpose and made to serve a beneficent end. Vice is virtue misplaced. Appetite? Is that a vice? There are some readers of this book who would better eat less than they do; but there are others whose doctors wish them to eat more than they do. Some have too much appetite, and some not appetite enough. Appetite is a virtue; it is the misdirection and misuse of appetite which is a vice. Approbativeness, is that a sin? A man without any care for the opinions of others is a man without sympathy; he cannot understand other men. Pride, is that a sin? A man without pride! Such a creature is not a man; he has not a vertebrate column. Acquisitiveness, is that a sin? Acquisitiveness, which is a seed of all manner of evil, is also a seed of all manner of good. It drives the busy wheels of industry and sets us all working. What our Father says is this: Not only will I

allow no sin you have committed to separate you from me; not only will I pluck the evil out of your evil doing and make it bring forth good; but I will make the sin in you a virtue if you will let me.

Moses has been called the meekest man in history. But when he brought the Egyptian to the ground with a single blow and killed him, I do not believe Moses was the meekest man on earth. What is meekness? Meekness is passion tamed. And because Moses had this power of passion, he had in him a power of patience. Patience involves, first of all, a power to feel, and secondly, the power to keep that feeling in control. Paul, brought up as a Pharisee, never, as his letters clearly show, lost his pride; but it was so purified, transfigured, inspired by a new purpose and directed to a new object that what had been a vice became a virtue. It was no longer pride in himself and his own righteousness, but pride in his Leader and in the Cause to which he had consecrated himself. He became a leader of a despised sect and the follower of a convict condemned first by a Jewish and then by a Roman Tribunal, and put to the most ignoble death known to that age. And even in this outcast sect Paul was

looked upon with suspicion by his co-religionists as a heretic. But never did he apolgize; never did he take a defensive attitude. He gloried in being a Jew, gloried in being a Christian Jew, gloried in his Convict-Leader, gloried in the cross on which that Leader had been put to death. His pride became an instrument of power and an equipment for service. His scarlet sin became white as snow.

Nor is this transformation of character wrought by the spirit of Jesus Christ merely in the individual: it is also social and organic. The great upward and forward movements in human history are divinely inspired movements; the Democratic movement, the Emancipation movement, the Temperance movement, the present movement towards international justice and peace are all parts of that greater movement which we call Christianity. God is re-creating the world.

My realization of the fact that Jesus Christ does not promise remission of penalty but does promise remission of sin revolutionized my theology because it revolutionized my religious experience. Let me here in five definitions briefly define that revolution.

Salvation no longer means to me deliverance from

Hell and admission to Heaven; it means deliverance from Sin. Exemption from penalty without deliverance from sin would not be salvation. If a good man were to go to Hell and retain his goodness he would be saved. If a bad man were to go to Heaven and retain his evil nature, he would be lost. Heaven must be in us — Hell is in some. The Gospel is not the good news that guilty men may be saved from punishment, but the good news that guilty men may be made virtuous. In one word, Salvation is character.

Justification by faith no longer means to me that Christ has suffered the penalties of my sins and therefore if I accept his sacrifice God will treat me as though I were innocent although I am guilty; it means that Jesus Christ offers himself to me as my divine companion and if I accept his companionship I can be made virtuous although I have been guilty.

Atonement no longer means to me that Christ has made a reparation to God for the wrong I have done and therefore God is reconciled to me. It means that Christ has by his life and teaching interpreted God to me and by his personal presence

inspires in me the will to do my Father's will and so has reconciled me to God.

Regeneration does not mean to me a new faculty miraculously given to man by some magic formula, as baptism, or by some supernatural experience for which man must wait. In every normal man is the capacity for goodness and truth, for love and service, for hope and joy. But this sleeping capacity is naught unless it is awakened into life. It is a seed, but a lifeless seed until it is given life by a divine power above itself. So I might say to the seeds in my garden bed, You can never come into the kingdom of light and life and beauty until you are born from above, and all the while God's sun, which shines alike on the evil and the good, is waiting to give them life.

Incarnation means to me more than that the Spirit of God dwelt unrecognized by the world centuries ago for a few years in Jesus of Nazareth; it also means to me that the same Spirit still dwells in the world, carrying on now with the followers of Jesus the work of serving and saving men which the same Spirit carried on with Jesus then. Incarnation to me is not merely an historical episode; it is an

eternal fact. "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice and open the door I will come unto him and will sup with him and he with me." This figure interprets to me the spiritual aspirations of mankind. God is love. Where God is, love is. And love is everywhere: a universal presence, a mighty though not resistless power in human life.

We look back into the past for a memory of a God that was, or forward into the future for a hope of a God that is to be; and all the while God stands at the door and knocks for admission to our lives. Love is God knocking.

Love knocks at the heart of the expectant mother, that mother-love may interpret God to her. Love knocks at the heart of the boys and girls at school and college, that friendship may interpret God to them. Love knocks at the heart of the youths and the maidens, that a love as strong as death, which many waters cannot quench nor floods drown, and which is of infinitely more value to them than all their possessions, may interpret God to them. Love knocks at the door of the mill and the mine that by making labor a service love may

interpret the spirit of him who is the Maker of heaven and earth. Love knocks at the door of sorrow, that human sympathy may interpret to the mourner him who for our sake became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Love knocks at the prison doors, that human forgiveness may interpret him who came to seek and to save the lost. And love inspires the faith and hope which looks up from the hour of death and forward to the day of judgment not with dread, but with rejoicing, and sings: Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, let the sea roar and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein; for Love is coming; he is coming to judge the world with righteousness and the people with his truth.

While I was engaged in writing this chapter the life of the Reverend Dr. Daniel Bliss was published and a copy was sent to me by its author, Dr. Bliss's eldest son. Dr. Bliss entered the missionary service of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1856 and remained in that service until his death in the ninety-third year of his age, in 1916. For thirty-six years he was the active and honored President of the Syrian Protestant

College in Beirut, Syria. Toward the end of his life he wrote some reminiscences for his children and grandchildren. These reminiscences, parts of which are included in the life by his son, contain the following statement in which he defines with characteristic clearness his faith, which both interprets and confirms the faith which in this chapter I have been endeavoring to depict:

"Some people have no clear idea in matters of religion what is cause and what is effect. Some seem to think that God loves mankind because Christ came and died for them Just the opposite is true, for God so loved the world that He gave His only Son to us. Some think that God loves us because we love Him. The opposite is true: we love God because He first loved us. Some seem to think that the Atonement made a change in God's attitude towards us; God changeth not, and the Atonement was made not to change Him but to change us. Some seem to think that God was angry and Christ came to reconcile Him; Paul says the opposite is true: God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."

In his father's biography the son says that his father inherited the Calvinistic tradition. Three-quarters of a century spent by him in Bible study and Christian teaching in Syria and three-quarters of a century spent by me in Bible study and Chris-

tian teaching in America brought us both to substantially the same understanding and interpretation of the Gospel message. And it is interesting to note how in spirit this expression of the father's faith tallies with that of a younger son, Howard Bliss, for four years my associate in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, and subsequently, and until his death in 1920, his father's successor in the College Presidency.[1] In the interpretation of the Gospel furnished in this chapter there is nothing unique. It is only the expression of a conviction to which many of the most devout and earnest disciples of Christ and students of his teaching have been coming during the last half century.

If it is true that Jesus Christ came not to reconcile God to the world but to reconcile the world to God, not to redeem men from punishment but to redeem them from sin, what is the meaning of his sacrifice? Has it any meaning? To a consideration of that question I devote the next chapter.

[1] See Epilogue at close of the volume.

## CHAPTER IX

### I CAME TO GIVE MY LIFE A RANSOM FOR MANY

No reader will understand this chapter unless he has first understood what I have endeavored to make clear in the preceding chapter: Salvation is not deliverance from punishment but deliverance from sin. "The wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." As the sun drives out the darkness by the gift of light, as the doctor drives out disease by the gift of health, as the teacher drives out ignorance by the gift of knowledge, so God drives out sin by the gift of his own life. We are saved not by imputation but by impartation of righteousness; not by being treated as though we were innocent when we are guilty, but by being made virtuous though we were guilty. In the language of Paul, we are "conformed to the image of God's Son that he may be the first born among many brethren."

The gift of life can never be conferred except through self-sacrifice.

The mother who bore us laid down her life in order that she might give a new life to the world. I do not suppose that any man can comprehend the strange feeling of hope and fear which struggles within the awe-struck heart of the expectant mother. She goes down to the brink of that mysterious stream which is both the river of life and the river of death, and knows not whether the ferryman will come to carry her away to the unknown land or out of the unknown land will bring a new life to her. When the new born child is laid in her arms her travail pain is not over. Just begun is that mother's experience, which is at once the greatest fear and the greatest hope, the greatest sorrow and the greatest joy of human life. Not only in those few hours of physical anguish does she suffer; her life is one long, joyful self-sacrifice — joyful because the greatest joy of life is the joy of self-sacrifice. She daily lays down her life for her child. She delights in menial services rendered to him which she has never before rendered to any one; she abandons the society in which market place she

was wont to exchange services of good will, and devotes herself to the society of the babe who takes all and gives nothing. The songs she sings to her babe are her only music; her chief literature is the stories she reads to the growing child; her most enticing games are those she plays with him; her most instructive studies are those in which she is his leader. She fears nothing so much as that he may become estranged from her and from his home and fall into vicious habits; she hopes for nothing so much as that he may grow up to be gentle and strong, just and generous, courageous and wise; and she experiences a remorse in his incipient vices far greater than any he will ever know, unless in later years the memory of her tears comes out of the past to teach him. Motherhood is one long travail because it is the supremest revelation which human experience affords of life-giving, and life-giving is always costly to the giver. This it is which makes motherhood the most revered of all offices and mother the most sacred of all words.

Next in real honor though not in popular repute is the teacher. She, too, is a life-giver; she, too, knows the travail pain of imparting life. I said

once to a famous educator, "I should think you would get tired of teaching the same lessons year after year; what monotony of toil is yours." He replied, "That is because you are not a teacher, Mr. Abbott. An editor is interested in new themes; a teacher is interested in new pupils." The teacher's problem is as old as the ages and yet new with every morning and differs with every pupil. It is easy to lead a horse to water, but hard to make him drink. If only these boys and girls were eager to learn, what a delight it would be to teach them. But they are not eager to learn. And how to awaken intellectual ambition, concentration of effort, steadiness of purpose, is the teacher's problem. The chief intellectual quality she needs is clearness of expression. The chief moral quality she needs is inspired patience. And the much coveted title of Ph.D. does not certify to either. If she have the teacher's ambition, how often as she confronts stolid and indifferent faces must she cry out, Their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes have they closed lest at any time they should hear with their ears and see with their eyes and should understand with their hearts. How often as she

sees them discarding her counsels, resenting her discipline and drifting away from her influence must she sorrowfully say to herself, I would have gathered you together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not!

I have already indicated in a previous chapter that the power and the glory of the Church is in its spirit of self-sacrifice: of the Roman Catholic Church not in its cathedrals and the jeweled robes of its priests, but in the self-sacrificing lives of its consecrated sisterhoods; of the Protestant Church not in the autocratic Archbishop Laud but in the self-sacrificing lives of the persecuted Pilgrims. The Church is strong only when it goes out to seek and to save that which is lost. The altar in the chancel and the cross over it are but symbols. The Church is powerful when the spirit which the altar and the cross symbolize inspires it to service and self-sacrifice. Only a missionary church is a true church; only a life-giving church is a living church. General Booth in his ever memorable address when the Freedom of the City was presented to him by the Lord Mayor of London revealed the secret of its power: "The Army has invited the drunkard,

the harlot, the criminal, the pauper, the friendless, the giddy, dancing, frivolous throngs, to come and seek God." What sacrifice giving that invitation involved the story of General Booth's life makes evident.

The spirit of self-sacrifice is the secret of national greatness. At this writing (1920) the United States is second to no other Nation in its wealth, its power, its opportunity for moral leadership. What has made it great? Only citizens make a Nation great, and only citizens who possess the qualities of greatness — service and sacrifice. The spirit of self-sacrifice called on the men of 1776, and they laid down their lives to win liberty for themselves and bequeath it to their children. It called on the men of 1812, and they laid down their lives to win the freedom of the seas for the commerce of the world. It called on the men of 1861, and they laid down their lives to maintain the life of a Nation threatened with destruction and to win the emancipation of a race denied the inalienable right to liberty. It called on the men of 1898, and they laid down their lives to set free a helpless neighbor from a sixteenth century oppression. It

called on the men of 1917, and they laid down their lives to save their oppressed brothers across the sea. Ever since the first Pilgrims set sail from Plymouth, it has been calling to their brothers and, answering the call, millions of immigrants have come hither from other lands; most of them poor, many of them illiterate, few of them comprehending the nature of the liberty they sought. But we who were born freemen cannot easily realize what tears, what heart aches, what home-sickness many of these who are now our fellow citizens have suffered in leaving their homes, their churches, their native land, breaking away from all their sacred associations and honored traditions, in order that they might win for themselves and their children and their children's children among strangers in an unknown country, freedom, education, a better industrial opportunity, a larger life. Theirs, too, has been the spirit of self-sacrifice which puts aspiration above present possession and the love of others above self-love. The glory of America is not in its mines and forests, its prairies and water powers, its railways and sky-scrapers, but in its Valley Forge, its Gettysburg, its San Juan Hill, its Château-Thierry, its

too little honored immigrant population, and in its churches, its schools, and its colleges, built and maintained by the spirit of self-sacrifice.

Henry Drummond has shown in his discerning volume, "The Ascent of Man," that this life of self-sacrifice is discernible throughout the drama of creation daily enacted before our eyes, from the division of the cell in the very beginnings of life to the highest ministrations of self-sacrificing love in motherhood. "There are," he writes, "*two* Struggles for Life in every living thing; the Struggle for Life and the Struggle for the Life of Others." And again: "The Creation is a drama, and no drama was ever put upon the stage with only one actor. The Struggle for Life is the 'Villain' of the piece, no more; and, like the 'Villain' in the play, its chief function is to re-act upon the other players for higher ends. There is, in point of fact, a second factor which one might venture to call the Struggle for the Life of Others, which plays an equally prominent part. Even in the early stages of development, its contribution is as real, while in the world's later progress — under the name of Altruism — it assumes a sovereignty

before which the earlier Struggle sinks into insignificance." And still again: "The first chapter or two of the Story of Evolution may be headed the Struggle for Life, but take the book as a whole and it is not a tale of battle. It is a Love story."

That sacrifice is the law of nature is recognized by such purely scientific and avowedly unreligious writers as Darwin and Haeckel; but nowhere I think is it more beautifully portrayed and scientifically demonstrated than in this volume of Henry Drummond, from which I must content myself with one more quotation in which the truth is interpreted with equal scientific clearness and spiritual beauty.

To interpret the course of Evolution without this [law of sacrifice] would be to leave the richest side even of material Nature without an explanation. Retrace the ground even thus hastily travelled over, and see how full Creation is of meaning, of anticipation, of good for man, how far back begins the undertone of Love. Remember that nearly all the beauty of the world is Love-Beauty — the corolla of the flower and the plume of the grass, the lamp of the firefly, the plumage of the bird, the horn of the stag, the face of a woman; that nearly all the music of the natural world is Love-Music — the song of the nightingale, the call of the mammal, the chorus of the insect, the serenade of the lover; that nearly all the

foods of the world are Love-foods — the date and the raisin, the banana and the bread-fruit, the locust and the honey, the eggs, the grains, the seeds, the cereals, and the legumes; that all the drinks of the world are Love-drinks — the juice of the sprouting grain and the withered hop, the milk from the udder of the cow, the wine from the Love-cup of the vine. Remember that the Family, the crown of all higher life, is the creation of Love; that Co-operation, which means power, which means wealth, which means leisure, which therefore means art and culture, recreation and education, is the gift of Love. Remember not only these things, but the diffusions of feeling which accompany them, the elevations, the ideals, the happiness, the goodness, and the faith in more goodness, and ask if it is not a world of Love in which we live.[1]

Truly does Drummond say that "Literally, scientifically, Love is life." Myriad are the voices with which nature proclaims that God is Love and that Love can give life only through suffering and self-sacrifice. Science confirms what the heart of man has desired to believe. Love and sacrifice — the Struggle for Others — is the law of human nature because it is the law of God's own nature. His own spirit, the spirit of love, service and sacrifice, he breathed into man in the dawn of creation, and still breathes into every child of man who is

[1] Henry Drummond: "The Ascent of Man," page 232.

brought into the world. As the mother can give life to the child, the saint to the church, the patriot to the nation, the nation to the world, and nature to her great progeny, so God can give his life to his children only by sacrifice.

The pagans offered sacrifices to appease the wrath of angry gods or win the favor of corruptible gods; the Israelites offered sacrifices to satisfy the law of a just God or to express their thanks for the goodness of a merciful God. Both offered sacrifices by or on behalf of men to God or the gods. The Glad Tidings of Jesus Christ is that sacrifice for sin is offered not by man to God but God to man; it is not an act of man to procure forgiveness but an act of God conferring forgiveness. God brings the gift into the temple and man comes empty-handed. The rich One brings his wealth to the poor; the wise One brings his wisdom to the ignorant; the strong One brings his strength to the weak; the living One brings his life to the dead.

The New Testament writers present this truth in many different ways.

Sometimes in argument with the Jews, as in the Epistle to the Hebrews: there is no longer need

of a Temple, for man is the Temple and God dwells in him; there is no longer need of a sacrifice, for God's Son is the sacrifice.

Sometimes in a figure: the Lamb of God taketh away the sins of the world; the Lamb is one which God provides, man has not to provide one.

Sometimes in explicit terms: Hereby know we love because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Sometimes as God's unspeakable gift to the world: God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.

Sometimes as the revelation in a divinely endowed human life of what God is and what we ought to be: Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.

Sometimes by a figure often used in Christian literature but often misunderstood and misinter-

preted. "The life of the flesh," said the Jewish law, "is in the blood." This use of blood to signify the vital principle, the life, the temper of mind, the natural disposition, the inherited quality or character is very common in English literature and ought to have saved us from misunderstanding it as used in the Bible. "The blood of Christ," says Stanley, "means the inmost essence of his character." [1] Substitute the words "deliverance from sin" for "forgiveness of sin" and "life poured out" for "blood shed" and texts which have often been emptied of their meaning become vital again.

This is the New Covenant in my life poured out for many for their deliverance from sin.

Except a man imbibe my spirit of life he cannot be my disciple.

The spirit of Christ's life cleanseth us from all sin.

Without the imparting of life there can be no deliverance from sin.

[1] See Dean Stanley's Essay on "The Body and the Blood" in his "Christian Institutions." See also the illustrations of this customary use of blood in English literature given by the Century Dictionary.

We are saved not by the drops of blood which trickled down from Christ's hands and feet, not by the blood and water that flowed after his death from Christ's pierced side; but by the life which that blood symbolized; the life given from his early boyhood to his death; the life still given by him in every self-sacrificing service of mother to her children, of every Christian worker to his church, of every patriotic citizen to his country, of the loyal soldier laying down his life on the field of battle. Every aspiration to a life of love, service and sacrifice, however it may seem to come, repeats the call of the Apostle—"I beseech you by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

It was not by his death that Christ saved the world, but by laying down his life for the world—by his death only as that was an inevitable consequence of the completeness of his consecration to his Father's will. Passion week began when he was born; yea, when in the counsels of eternity he said, I will go down into that suffering, sin-stricken world and will lay down my life for it. From the be-

ginning to the end his life was laid down for humanity. Laid down as truly when he went into the wilderness and wrestled with the tempter; as truly when he went into the courts of Jerusalem and scourged out the traders, knowing what hostility he was arousing; as truly when he set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, where his enemies were, and his disciples followed amazed and wonder-stricken that he should go thither; as truly when he knew the plot that Judas was making for his destruction and refused to flee; as truly when he faced the mob in the Temple courts in Jerusalem and told the Hebrews to their face that they were traitors to their God and to their native land — as truly then as when in the court of Pilate he said, "I am a king," and when in the court of Caiaphas he said, "I am the Son of God," and walked out bearing his cross to be nailed upon it. And in all this he was interpreting the life of God in his world; the life of a Father who always has compassion on his children, always goes out to seek and to save them, always shares their sorrows and their sins.

Tersely and very beautifully and very clearly has

Sir Oliver Lodge put this truth, this revelation of the nature and perpetual sacrifice of God through the life and passion of Jesus Christ, in what is, I think, the briefest life of Jesus in literature, but not the least significant:

> Undoubtedly the Christian idea of God is the simple one. Overpoweringly and appallingly simple is the notion presented to us by the orthodox Christian churches: — A babe born of poor parents, born in a stable among cattle because there was no room for them in the village inn — no room for them in the inn — what a master touch! Revealed to shepherds. Religious people inattentive. Royalty ignorant, or bent on massacre. . . . Then the child growing into a peasant youth, brought up to a trade. At length a few years of itinerant preaching; flashes of miraculous power and insight. And then a swift end: set upon by the religious people; his followers over-awed and scattered, himself tried as a blasphemer, flogged, and finally tortured to death. Simplicity most thorough and most strange! In itself it is not unique; such occurrences seem inevitable to highest humanity in an unregenerate world; but who, without inspiration would see in them a revelation of the nature of God? [1]

Jesus Christ came to a Nation in which for centuries religion had found two not always consistent interpretations — one priestly, the other

[1] Sir Oliver Lodge: "Raymond," p. 381.

prophetic. The priestly conception centered around and was expressed by an elaborate sacrificial system whose temple ran red with the blood of slaughtered cattle.[1] This priestly conception Jesus Christ never approved by word or act. He frequently promised forgiveness of sin, but never suggested that the penitent should offer a sacrifice to insure the forgiveness or complete the penitence. He told his disciples that he must himself suffer for sinful humanity, that he must give himself a ransom for many, that he must bear the cross and be borne upon it; but he also told them that by so doing he would show forth the glory of his Heavenly Father. His suffering love Christ never interpreted as man's offering to God; but always as God's offering to man. Man does not in his deep abasement offer sacrifice to appease God's wrath; God in his infinite love offers sacrifice to purify man and to impart life to him.

Christ's instructions to his disciples are equally

[1] In "The Life and Literature of the Ancient Hebrews" I have indicated more fully the conflict between these two conceptions of religion and traced very briefly the way in which the priestly conception was borrowed from paganism and grafted upon Judaism.

inconsistent with the notion that pardon is to be purchased by sacrifice. He bade his disciples forgive their enemies as their Father forgives them, a counsel which would require us to ask a sacrifice of every one that wrongs us, if the Father asks a sacrifice by us or on our behalf as a condition of his forgiveness. Christ told a story once which makes this parallelism perfectly clear. A lord had a servant who owed him one hundred talents and when he had nothing to pay, freely forgave him the debt. But this servant went out and cast into prison a fellow servant who owed him one hundred pence. And his lord was wroth with him for treating his fellow servant with such inconsistent inhumanity. The ground of Christ's appeal to his disciples to forgive freely those that have wronged them is the fact that the Heavenly Father freely forgives them that have sinned against him. In neither case is the payment of the unpayable debt to be demanded.

Is there then no sacrifice? Surely there is a sacrifice; but by God to man, not by man to God.

It has been said that in the parable of the Prodigal Son there is no hint of sacrifice. Is this true?

There is no hint of any sacrifice by man to God. The father in the parable does not wait to be entreated, nor to have his wrath appeased, nor to have his justice satisfied, nor to have the debt of the sinful son paid by or for him. But the suffering of God for his sinful children is clearly and vividly portrayed. The father had mourned his son as lost, and behold he is found; he had mourned his son as dead, and behold there is in his repentance the sign of a dawning life. The father had compassion on him, that is, suffered with him. And while the son still held himself afar off, ashamed to go on but reluctant to turn back, the father went out to welcome him. The son suffered the shame of his own sin. The father suffered the shame of his son's sin. This common experience brought them together. If the son had not felt ashamed of his sin no love of the father could have made the son a sharer in his father's life. If the father had not felt the shame of his son's sin, if he had dismissed it lightly and carelessly as a "sowing of wild oats," the son could not have shared his father's life. But when the son and the father share in a common sorrow, when repentance and

sacrifice meet, a life in common begins; the fatal separation between the father and his child is ended; they are at one; at-one-ment is made.

The only sacrifice Christianity knows is self-sacrifice; and self-sacrifice is the glory of God and the power of God.

From the time of Christ the sacrifice in the Jewish temple ceases. The Christian temple courts are not reddened with the blood of victims. Sacrifices are no longer offered to God; the sacrifice of the Son of God is accepted by man. The passion and death of Christ are the witness of a love deep, tender, true, eternal, in the heart of the Father, the source of all love, causing all love; but itself uncaused. The culmination of the long spiritual development issues in the declaration, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he first loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." He is not to be propitiated; he propitiates himself. He satisfies his justice by his own redeeming love. The life, suffering and death of Christ are not to enable God to be a justifier, notwithstanding he is just, but to show that his is a justice which does justify, a righteousness which

rightens, a nature which, because he cannot brook unrighteousness, suffers the shame of it as though it were his own, until by his suffering love he has entered even callous and indifferent hearts and filled them with his Spirit.

Is this to say that sin is a light matter, easily overcome, of small consequence, with little ill dessert and little evil consequence? On the contrary, sin not only fills to the brim with suffering the cup of him who indulges in it, not only presses a cup of even greater bitterness to the lips of every loving and Christlike soul who longs and strives to deliver his brother from the poisoned chalice, but it brings suffering upon the heart of the infinite and loving God, who is himself able to save his children from their own self-destruction only by his own suffering of their self-inflicted penalty. This is the Gospel. And history proves it a far more effective message for the redemption of mankind than any message of law and penalty, however qualified and ameliorated by a message of mercy purchased only by sacrifice offered by the sinner or on his behalf to an angry God, hard to be entreated.

Let me try to make this clear by a simple illustration.

A young girl grows up in culture and refinement. She is surrounded in her home by every conceivable comfort. The air she breathes is as pure as the air that blows from Mont Blanc. But she reads the story of sin and degradation in the East Side of New York, and it fills her with bitter sorrow. It is a terrible thing, she says, that men and women should be living such lives as these. Will you satisfy her by saying that they will suffer for it? Will you satisfy her by saying, Let the drunkard alone, and he will have poverty and disease and hunger and every form of wretchedness? Let selfishness alone and it will embitter the lives of all selfish people. Let malice alone and they that are living in malice will pay the natural penalty of their iniquity. Will that satisfy her? No! She will reply, That is what troubles me. I want to cure, not to punish. Justice does not satisfy love, never can satisfy love. She leaves her home — the physical luxury, the pure atmosphere, the congenial companionship — goes over to the East Side, takes

a room, lives there with a single companion, and gives herself to the work of cleansing where there is filth, redeeming where there is vice, bringing love in where there was hate. Go and look at her. Her face shines with a glory that was never there before. If you could see into her heart, you would see there a joy inspiring her that she never knew before. She has propitiated herself by her own forgiving sacrifice. Her love is satisfying her. All propitiation is self-propitiation. One person can never satisfy another. There is no wrath of God to be appeased by human sacrifice; none that can be satisfied by natural penalty. The flames of hell never could burn out the wrath of God. It will be burned out by the fire of his own infinite love.

The sacrifice goes not forth from man to God to win his mercy, but from God to man to win him back to life. And it goes from man to man if the spirit of God, that is, the spirit of love, service and sacrifice is in man. What does Christ mean when he says that we are to take up our cross and follow him? What does Paul mean when he says

we must fill up that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ by our own suffering? Is the wrath of God not yet appeased? Does he still hold his anger, despite all these generations of tears, suffering, pain, agony, and all the agony on Gethsemane and the blood upon the cross? Must you and I still suffer in order to appease the wrath of a still angry God? Surely not. To take up Christ's cross and follow him is to share with him in offering the sacrifice of love to sinful humanity, to whom love must still offer its sacrifice until sin is no more.

If I could paint the shadow of the cross, I would not paint it as the shadow of a yawning boy cast on the wall betokening his weariness of the task which has been set him to perform. Have you not seen the mother with her arms outstretched and the little child drawn by this silent invitation of her welcoming love, run quickly to her that the mother's arms might clasp him to her bosom. I would paint the shadow of that mother's love upon the wall; for God's love reaches out to lay hold upon the weakest, the poorest, the most sinful of his children,

and the cross of Christ is the shadow thrown upon the earth of the Father's inviting and welcoming love.

The glory of Christ is not the triumphal entrance into Jerusalem but the funeral procession from Jerusalem to Calvary. And the glory of Christianity is in the lives of love, service and sacrifice of the unnumbered millions who, following their Leader, have laid down their lives and are laying down their lives for their brethren. Christ's cross is the throne of God. The crown which He bestows upon his faithful followers is the crown of thorns — the self-sacrifice of a life-giving love.

# CHAPTER X

## THY KINGDOM COME ON EARTH

In all that Jesus said and did — inspiring a new philanthropy, imparting the life of the spirit, curing the sin-sick, laying down his life in ceaseless service and self-sacrifice,— he was fulfilling the mission which his Father had entrusted to him.

He began his ministry as a herald preaching to an expectant people, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. He ended it by testifying under oath to the Sandhedrin that he was the long-hoped for Deliverer and declaring to Pilate that he was a King whose empire and whose arms were truth. To that mission he devoted himself in life; for that mission he surrendered himself to death; that mission he passed on to his followers; and the hope that the Kingdom of God might come on earth which dominated his life and sustained him in death he bequeathed to them to be their prayer and their life purpose.

What did he mean by the Kingdom of God?

From the very beginning of their history as a Nation, the Jews had been taught by their prophets to look forward to a Golden Age when Israel should be a world ruler, all peoples, nations and languages should serve him, and under his just and beneficent rule poverty, ignorance, oppression and wars should cease. These prophecies are often obscure and sometimes seemingly contradictory. Sometimes this Kingdom is to be brought in by a King in his glory, sometimes by a Sufferer who will be despised and rejected of men, sometimes by Israel embodied in a divine leader, sometimes by the Nation whom the prophet personifies as itself a Leader. This is not strange. We mistake if we imagine that the object of prophecy is to give accurate information of future events. This the prophets have never succeeded in doing, probably never endeavored to do. They were poets; they were not anticipating historians. They spoke words of hope to inspire to courage and words of warning to admonish to caution; and their words were not less effectual because both the promises and the warnings were often ill-defined and imperfectly understood. In the first

century the spirit of prophecy was dead in Israel, scribes had taken the place of prophets. The people, illy instructed by these "blind leaders of the blind" interpreted literally the prophecies which pleased them and ignored the others. This has been the custom of literalists in all ages.

They were familiar with world empires. At successive epochs Egypt, Chaldea, Assyria, Babylon Greece, had ruled the world. At that time Rome was ruler of the world. It was easy to believe that Israel's turn would come, that the gods of the pagan would disappear, that Jehovah would take their place, that Rome would fall into ruins and Jerusalem would become the world capital, that the prophecy of Daniel would be fulfilled and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven would be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. Doubtless the national ideal was both vague and contradictory. National ideals always are vague and contradictory. In America to-day the ideal of some is material prosperity, of others educational development, of still others spiritual richness of life. As now, so then. The Kingdom of God meant prosperity and happiness and also righteousness and

peace. Some put emphasis on prosperity, others on righteousness. But they all agreed upon at least two points: that Israel would rule the world; and that her rule would be given to her by Jehovah as a sudden and splendid gift. "The idea of a gradual and regular progress upon earth was totally unknown to them. They, on the contrary, were now familiar with, and found no objection to, ideas of sudden or catastrophic change. In fact they usually thought that the Golden Age would (by divine intervention) immediately succeed an age of violence and wickedness; the worst would be immediately followed by the best." They believed "that God could and would suddenly, and one might almost say violently, create a new world, not through human coöperation, not through human achievement, but by His own power, His own will, His own goodness, and for His own sake and glory as much as for the sake and glory of Israel." [1]

In his first recorded sermon, preached in the syna-

[1] C. G. Montefiore: "Outlines of Liberal Judaism," p. 151. "Some Elements of the Religious Teaching of Jesus," 1910, p. 64. This interpretation by a liberal and scholarly modern Jewish teacher cannot be suspected of Christian prejudice against the Jewish conception of the Kingdom of God. In fact Dr. Montefiore thinks Jesus shared that conception.

gogue of the village of Nazareth, the home of his youth, Jesus took for his text a passage from one of the ancient prophets foretelling the Golden Age. He declared that the fulfillment of these prophecies was at hand. He was heard at first with delight. But when he went on to say that Jehovah was God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, and took two instances from the Old Testament history to illustrate the truth that God is no respecter of races as he is no respecter of persons, the wrath of his hearers knew no bounds, the worshipping congregation was transformed into a mob, and he would have been slain on the spot had he not with that mysterious magnetic power, of which history affords other like examples, awed the crowd and passed through their midst unharmed. Never thereafter in public discourse did he attempt to define in unmistakable terms his interpretation of the coming Kingdom. His teaching concerning it was disguised in parables — purposely disguised. If it were stated plainly the people would have none of it. To stories they would listen, and afterwards, thinking them over and discussing them among themselves, they might come to some glimmerings of the truth. When oc-

casionally he disclosed to his immediate friends his mission he cautioned them to tell no one; to tell would close the only door of access to the people which was open to him and would do not good but harm. When toward the end of his life his hearers caught his meaning the effect was to fan the smoking prejudice of the ecclesiastical party into a hot flame of anger. When in a sermon of some length he explained to the people of Galilee, where his friends were mostly to be found, that the Kingdom of God could come only to a people who shared his spirit of service and self-sacrifice, so many of his former disciples abandoned him that he turned sadly to his twelve intimate friends with the question "Will ye also go away?"

Matthew has collected in one chapter of his narrative several of these parables of the Kingdom. Adding to them one reported by Mark but not by Matthew, and guided by his own interpretation to the Twelve of several of these parables, we may summarize Jesus' interpretation of the Kingdom of God as follows:

It will not come suddenly nor violently; it will not come as a divine gift without human coöperation,

nor by a catastrophic change. It will grow up like a seed planted in the ground. As the earth bears fruit of itself and we know not why nor how, so this kingdom will grow up by spiritual forces within men,— a growth not a gift, or, rather, a gift that is a growth, but brought forth from men not imposed upon them. Its growth therefore will depend upon the nature of the individuals and of the races to whom the truth of God comes. Evil will grow as well as good; men will wonder whence the evil comes, and why, and whether the world is growing worse or better. The beginnings of the Kingdom will be insignificant; but it will grow to be a shade, a shelter, a bearer of fruit, a nesting place, a home of abundant life. It will be like yeast, a source of agitation. It will be costly,— all that a man hath he must be willing to give that he may possess it.

Other parables add other aspects of Jesus' teaching concerning the Kingdom. Often God will seem like an absentee landlord; men will be thrown upon their own resources, will be left to their own devices; trusted that they may be tried. In this Kingdom men are judged by their practice not by their profession. Of two sons, the one who promises his

father to do the task allotted to him and does nothing is rejected; the son who declines the task and then engages in it is accepted. The Kingdom is for all sorts and conditions of men, for Jew and Gentile, for good, bad and indifferent. It is like a feast to which the lame, the halt, and the blind are invited. It is a present life, not a something postponed to a future age. All things are now ready. It is among you.[1] It can he had by any one who wishes it. The only condition is loyalty. It is not a place but an attitude of mind, a course of conduct — in a word, a life. The separation between those in the Kingdom and those without it is invisible, as invisible as that between the loyal and the disloyal citizen of America. But it is an infinite gulf — as deep as hell, as broad as eternity. Two women are in the same social company: one is in the Kingdom of God, the other in the kingdom of fashion. Two merchants are in the same store: one is in the Kingdom of God, the other in the kingdom of greed. Two lawyers are in the same court room: one is in the Kingdom of God, the other in the kingdom of am-

[1] Or within you; either translation is possible, and there is really no practicable difference between the two interpretations.

bition. Two statesmen are in the same legislative chambers: one is in the Kingdom of God, the other in the kingdom of party policy. Two ministers are in the same ecclesiastical assembly: one is in the Kingdom of God, the other in the kingdom of false pretense. Everywhere there are sitting side by side in the same room, breathing the same air, taking part in the same activities, Paul and Agrippa, John and Judas, Christ and Caiaphas.

As the gulf, which separates the Kingdom of God from the Kingdom of the world is invisible, so is the mystic bond which unites in one great brotherhood the citizens of the Kingdom of God. In this Kingdom whose only law is love — doing justly, loving mercy, and walking in reverent and affectionate companionship with the All-Father, we its citizens, are united by a common purpose to make life worth living and this world a happier because a better world to live in; and by a common hope, an assurance that we shall succeed, because we are not only engaged in our Father's business but are working in his companionship and under the Leader whom he has given to us. In the eighteenth century Christians regarded themselves as pupils preparing

for a better world; in the twentieth century they regard themselves as architects and builders engaged in making a better world. There is truth in both conceptions; but the latter appears to me more in accord with the teaching and life of the Master. Our school is a practice school; an ambition both to acquire and show proficiency by practice inspires our energies and rules our life.

Out of this Kingdom have grown churches with their creeds, philanthropies with their constitutions, schools and colleges with their staffs of officials. But the Kingdom has neither creed, nor constitution, nor officials. Church history informs us that the creeds have been made for the purpose, not of including all Christlike spirits, but of excluding all of unorthodox opinions. When we meet in church assemblies to consider plans for Christian unity, the schemes proposed generally include acceptance of the same creed, the same sacraments and the same form of church organization. The process is disappointingly slow, the results disappointingly ineffective. But when we cease talking about union and engage in practical work, we find ourselves surprisingly at one. Where is the Protestant who

does not honor the Christlike courage of the Roman Catholic Cardinal Mercier in his single-handed defense of Belgium against the brigands who had overrun it? Where is the Churchman who does not honor the self-devotion of the Quaker Herbert Hoover to his task of administering the charities of a united humanity in feeding the starving millions of devastated and plague-stricken Europe? While we have been discussing theological plans for adopting some common symbols, behold, without a plan, our work for our fellow men has united us in a Red Cross Society and we have hung the symbol of love, service and sacrifice in the windows of Roman Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Agnostics.

Nor is it only in work we are united but also in our worship. "Theologians," wrote William Wordsworth to his friend, "may puzzle their heads about dogmas as they will, the religion of gratitude cannot mislead us. Of that we are sure, and gratitude is the handmaid to hope and hope the harbinger of faith." We may look in the creeds for conflicting opinions; but it is in our hymn books we must look for the experience of our faith and hope and love. When in 1850 Henry Ward Beecher pub-

lished the Plymouth Collection, he was sharply criticized by religious journals for including in it hymns by Roman Catholic and Unitarian singers. But now we invite to lead us in our worship The Calvinistic Toplady, in "Rock of Ages cleft for me," the Methodist Charles Wesley, in "Jesus Lover of my soul," the Roman Catholic Cardinal Newman in "Lead, Kindly Light," the Quaker Whittier in "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind," and the Unitarian Miss Adams in "Nearer, My God, to thee."

As both the boundaries of this kingdom and the bonds which unite its citizens in one great Brotherhood are invisible, so is the law which governs it. It is not engraven on stone nor written on parchment. The Ten Commandments are not laws issued by a King to which the citizens are subject; they are interpretations of laws wrought in man's nature by the Creator. The laws of health are the laws of God because the body is the creation of God. Similarly the spiritual laws are the laws of God because they are the laws of his own being, and he is the Father of our spirits and we inherit from him his nature. What we call the moral laws are as truly natural as are the laws of light, heat, electricity and

gravitation. The difference is that man can violate the laws of God, material nature cannot violate them. As the eye is made for seeing and the ear for hearing and the lungs for breathing, so the mind is made to perceive and apprehend truth and the conscience to perceive and appreciate right and wrong and the affections to hate that which is evil and love that which is good. Paul's counsel, "Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good," is an interpretation to man of his own divine nature. Depravity is not natural; it is, as Bushnell has said, contra-natural. The non-theological man recognizes this truth and calls the mother who deserts her child an "unnatural" mother.

To Paganism God was a King; but Jesus told his disciples, "When ye pray say Our Father." One difference between a king and a father is this: the king issues laws and demands of his subjects obedience — nothing more. The father also *demands* nothing more; but he wants more. He wants to be his child's ideal and the object of his child's reverencing love. The father needs the child no less than the child needs the father. The child needs some one to care for him; the father needs some one to

care for; the child needs some one to love him; the father needs some one to love. Our needs make us dear to God. Therefore it is that Jesus sums up all the laws of the Kingdom in the saying, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself."

Because the laws of God are the laws of our own nature, because his commands are only calls to us to live normal, natural lives, the kind of lives for which we are fitted, his Kingdom is a free Commonwealth. It has been well called by a modern scholar "The Republic of God." To live divinely is to live freely. The commandments of God are not restraints on our liberty but inspirations to liberty, for they are interpretations to us of our own true nature, and ideals of what we can become. If we are true to ourselves we shall be true to God, for we are his offspring.

Into these few pages I have tried to condense the experience of a lifetime. Into a few lines I here endeavor to condense the message of these pages.

Christianity means to me:

A new spirit of love service and sacrifice in humanity.

A new and ever developing life in art, literature, music, philosophy, government, industry, worship.

A relief from the heavy burden of remorse for past errors, blunders, and sins.

An ever growing aspiration for the future and an ever increasing power toward achievement.

Faith in ourselves and in our fellow men; in our infinite possibilities because in our infinite inheritance.

Faith in the great enterprise in which God's loyal children are engaged, that of making a new world out of this old world, a faith which failure does not discourage nor death destroy.

Faith in a Leader who both sets us our task and shares it with us; the longer we follow him and work with him, the more worthy to be loved, trusted and followed does he seem to us to be.

Faith in a companionable God whom we cannot understand, still less define, but with whom we can be acquainted, as a little child is acquainted with his mysterious mother.

Faith in our present possession of a deathless life

of the spirit, which we share with the Father of our spirits and our divinely appreciated leader.

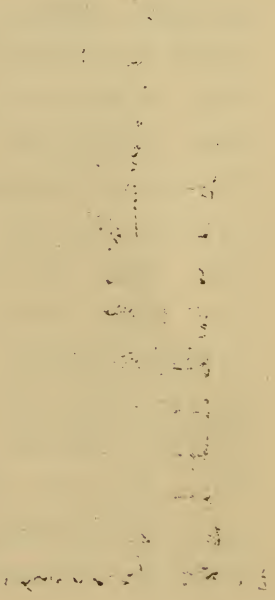
The autobiography of the unknown author of the one hundred and third psalm is the story of our past experience:

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies;
Who satisfieth thine age with good;
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle.

The prayer of the apostle to the Gentiles is the expression of our hope for the future:

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he will grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with

all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.



## EPILOGUE

Howard S. Bliss was associated with me in the pastorate of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, for four years. Then, after a successful independent pastorate in New Jersey, he accepted a call to become the successor of his father, the Reverend Daniel Bliss, as President of the Syrian Protestant College at Beirut, Syria. During the Great War (1914-1918) he preserved the College despite the machinations of astute and powerful foes, and maintained peace within the College between students who belonged to the races and shared the religious faiths of those who were grappling in deadly strife without. Then, his task accomplished, he came home to die. Eager student, loyal friend, chivalric soldier, patriotic American, devoted Christian, his last message to his generation was an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* published a few weeks before his death. From this, the culmination of his great career, I quote the following sentences which I would gladly make the culmination of my life's teaching:

Does Christ save you from your sin?
Call Him Savior!

Does He free you from the slavery of your passions?
Call Him Redeemer!

Does He teach you as no one else has taught you?
Call Him Teacher!

Does he mold and master your life?
Call Him Master!

Does He shine upon the pathway that is dark to you?
Call Him Guide!

Does He reveal God to you?
Call Him the Son of God!

Does He reveal man?
Call Him the Son of Man!

Or, in following Him, are your lips silent in your incapacity to define Him and His influence upon you?

Call Him by no name, but follow Him!

# APPENDIX

There are three sayings of Jesus reported in the Gospels which Catholic scholars regard as supporting the claim that Jesus gave to the apostles certain peculiar ecclesiastical powers which they were authorized and enabled to transmit to their successors in office. These are (1) "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). (2) "I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19 Compare Matt. 18:18). (3) "Jesus therefore said unto them again, Peace be with you; as the Father has sent me even so send I you. And when he had said this he breathed on them and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted them; whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." My interpretation of the first of these passages I have given in Chapter III. My interpretation of the other two here given are condensed and in one respect modified from those given in my commentary on the New Testament: (1875–1876).

I. And I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The key in the East was a symbol of authority, was made long, with a crook at one end, so that it could be

worn round the neck as a badge of office. To this use of the key reference is had in the phrase, "The government shall be upon his shoulder" (Isaiah 9:6) and in the promise to Eliakim, "The key of the house of David I will lay upon his shoulder" (Isaiah 22:22). The phrase "kingdom of heaven" in the Gospels never means the visible, external, organic church, and rarely, if ever, the future state in contrast with the present, but the reign of God in the individual soul, or in the community. The "keys of the kingdom of heaven" do not, then, symbolize power to admit or exclude from the earthly church, or from heaven, but power in the life of allegiance to God, i. e. in the Christian life. The word bind is never used in the N. T. as a metaphor for condemnation, but is used metaphorically for binding the individual by laws, as in Rom. 7:2, I Cor. 7:27, 39; and the word loose is never used as a symbol for pardon or deliverance from sin, but always, either literally of unbinding or dissolving, as in Mark 1:7; 2 Pet. 3, 10, 11, 12, or metaphorically of the relaxing or dissolving of a law, as in Matt. 5:19; John 5:18; 7:23; 10:35; I Cor. 7:27. The words "bind" and "loose" had also this well established significance among the Jewish rabbis, being nearly equivalent to "prohibit" and "permit."

Two questions remain to be asked and answered: First, On whom is this gift bestowed? Certainly not on Peter and his successors in office, for neither here nor anywhere else in the N. T. is there any hint that he had either office or successors. In Matt. 18:18 it is conferred certainly on all the twelve; and since it is there coupled with instructions concerning forgiveness, and a promise concerning prayer, which are of universal application, it may safely be regarded as not confined to them, but be-

stowed on all who possess a divinely inspired faith in Christ the Son of the living God. Second, Are there any parallel passages to this promise, as thus interpreted? Confessedly there are none which sustain the papal interpretation. The supposed power of the pope to admit to and shut out from heaven rest solely on this one verse, though John 20:23 is cited in support of his power to remit or retain sin. On the other hand, the right of the individual Christian to rely daily upon the personal help of a living Savior, and to be governed in his life, not by laws and rules and regulations, but by the indwelling Spirit of God, illuminating and inspiring his conscience, is abundantly confirmed by other passages of scripture. See for example John 8:32, 36; Rom. 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:17; 5:7; Gal. 3:25; 4:7, 31; 5:1, 16, 18; Col. 2:14–16, 20–22.

I understand, then, the promise of the keys to be made to Peter as the possessor of a living faith in Jesus as the Divine Messiah, and through him to all who, by a like faith, are endued with a like strength of character, God-given, and I would paraphrase it thus: To my disciples I will give authority in their spiritual life, so that they shall no longer be bound by rules and regulations like those of the Pharisees or of the Mosaic code, but whatsoever, under the inspiration of a living faith in me, they shall prohibit themselves, God will prohibit, and whatsoever under that inspiration they shall permit themselves, God will permit: for they shall have the mind of the spirit.

II. Whosoever sins you remit they are remitted unto them, etc.

The word remit signifies primarily to get rid of. It is

not penalty but sin which the apostles are empowered to get rid of. See chapter VIII in this book. Compare Micah 7:19; Isaiah 44:22. Here therefore there is no hint of any authority in apostle or apostolic successor to declare sins forgiven or unforgiven in his discretion; there is the declaration that when the disciple of Christ is filled with the Christ spirit and sets himself in the spirit of his Master to cure men of their sins, his work shall not be in vain — the devil cast out shall not return to find the house swept and garnished so that he may take possession again. The second clause is more difficult of interpretation. Taken literally it would seem to imply power to fasten it upon the sinner as by a curse. But can this language be taken literally? It is capable of a merely negative interpretation. The meaning then would be, You have power to redeem men from their sins; therefore the responsibility is laid upon you. If you fail the sins will be retained. History confirms this interpretation. The Wesleyan movement, the Salvation Army, the temperance, anti-slavery, and other reforms, attest the truth that persons possessed of a Christ-like spirit of purity, courage, and self-sacrifice have a marvelous power to cast out evil from the individuals and from the community, though they may have no office in the church, while on the other hand, that power has never been possessed by the mere ecclesiastical office holder, if he was not endowed with the Christ-like spirit.

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